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BEN OKRI'S THE FAMISHED ROAD: A CASE STUDY IN THE TRANSLATION OF NEW ENGLISHES.

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A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.
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Abstract

This dissertation suggests a new approach to the translation of African literature, and more precisely African literature in English, considering that the English language has evolved. In most former colonies, New Englishes exist alongside standard varieties of English. This linguistic trend needs to be accompanied by well thought out and researched strategies, if translations are to match the success of the original versions.

As a first step, the research report engages with a definition of New Englishes as well as of other important concepts in the research report: colonialism, post-colonialism, negritude, translation, nativisation and indigenisation. Examples of New Englishes are established through an analysis of *The Famished Road*. This is followed by a discussion of translation theory, with special focus on dynamic equivalence and functionalism. Finally, recommendations are made in relation to methods and strategies for translating a West African novel from English to French.

Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

_____

Roland Nkwain Ngam

December 2004.12.02

Dedication

For my sister Raïsa.

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I would like to thank all those who helped me when I was working on this research report.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 AIM

The aim of this research report is to look at the elements of New Englishes in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* as specific problems in translation and how translators might transfer such features into French in the same kind of hybrid language. First, Ben Okri's use of New Englishes as a reflection of socio-cultural reality in *The Famished Road* is analysed. Then translation strategies are discussed, drawing on postcolonial translation theories. The aim of this section is to suggest how to translate these nativised and hybrid forms of English into French.

1.2 RATIONALE

1.2.1 Introduction

Ben Okri comes from a line of very distinguished African writers who have a predilection for the fantastic, such as Amos Tutuola and Yodi Karone. *The Famished Road*, Okri's prize-winning novel about the adventures of Azaro, was published in 1991. Although the book is more famous for its blurred boundaries between the world of the living and the world of spirits, this research report focuses on another aspect that gives the book a very unique feel: the novelist's use of the English language. The novel bears traces of the writer's cultural and biological origins. It shows vestiges of the writer's colonial past and his desire to rid himself of the shackles of conformism. It is in the spirit of the times, as this quote by Jeanette Beer indicates:

> It may well be the case that in three hundred years' time, it will no longer be normal to speak of American English, British English, Pakistani English, Australian English, etc., as different phenomena included within the single wide ambit of "English" but instead refer

> to American, British, Pakistani and Australian, etc., as independent languages.
>
> (1997: 1)

The above quote does not directly mention the term New Englishes. However, trends all over the world show that the English language is being used differently in the five continents. In a report entitled *English in Action* (Anthony, 2000: 3) a Nigerian writer, Peter Enahoro, is even quoted as saying that "the trouble with the English language… is that it is no longer English". The English spoken in Nigeria or Cameroon or Sierra Leone is different from BBC English and it is not necessarily voiced in RP (Received Pronunciation). Before we proceed, it is important to define what we mean by the term New Englishes.

1.2.2 New Englishes: Definition.

Before discussion, it is necessary to distinguish between New Englishes, pidgins and creoles, which also occur in a context of language contact and shift. New Englishes are different from pidgin, which is a 'simplified' language with a vocabulary that comes from another language, but whose grammar is very different" (Fasold, 1990: 180) and from Creole, which arises "when a pidgin language becomes the native language of a new generation of children" (Fasold, 1990, 180).

For a variety of English to qualify as New English, it should meet the following criteria (Platt, Weber and Ho, 1984: 2):

- It is passed down through the education system.
- It is spoken in an area which was not inhabited by native speakers of English, like Australia and the United States of America.
- It is used for a wide range of functions by those who speak it.

- It has local features, i.e. it has become 'nativised' or 'localised'.

The following situations (Platt *et al*., 1984: 6) are most likely to favour the development of New Englishes around the world:

- New Englishes develop in areas where education in English meant education in a language totally unlike the home languages of the pupils or the languages they would hear around them in the streets and markets.
- In some parts of West Africa, especially along the coast of what are now Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Gambia and parts of Cameroon, an English-based *Pidgin* has developed.
- In some parts of the world, English has been taught in schools to speakers of an English-based Creole.

Kingsley Bolton (2003: 9) describes New Englishes as "the localized forms of English found in the Caribbean, West and East Africa and parts of Asia". In her PhD thesis titled *English in India: A study of language attitudes*, Annika Hohenthal uses the term "Diaspora varieties". Tom McArthur (1998: 10) calls these Englishes "nativised English" or "indigenised English" and says that they "occur in territories where it was not originally present, but English has been present for some time, and may or may not be the primary language of people using it" (1998: 5). Braj Kachru (1986: 5) confirms McArthur's claim that such varieties are "transplanted" and adds that they "are acquired primarily as second languages". Tom McArthur lists some of their characteristics in *The English Languages* (1998: 10) when he says:

> Typically, such a variety incorporates features of the regional language(s) concerned, including rhythm, accent, intonation, grammatical structures and words.

Anthea Gupta (2004:1) stresses that countries like Nigeria and India also have standard varieties of English and thus, it would be erroneous to consider all English in former colonies as New Englishes.

1.2.3 Why we have to study New Englishes

There are hundreds of languages in most African countries. In *West Africa and the English language*, John Spencer (1971: 31) mentions 'scores of vernacular languages' in Cameroon; Koenig, Chia and Povey (1983: 7) are a bit more precise and talk of 285 languages for a population of 7,663, 236 while Ayo Bamgbose (1971: 36) talks of about 400 in Nigeria. In *Translation and the Postcolonial Experience*, Samia Mehrez (1992: 120) quotes these words by Abdelkebir Khatibi in *La Mémoire Tatouée* to illustrate the fact that the African has to deal with several languages on a daily basis:

> A l'école, un enseignement laïc, imposé à ma religion; je devins triglotte, lisant le français sans le parler, jouant avec quelques bribes de l'arabe écrit, et parlant le dialecte comme quotidien. Où, dans ce chassé-croisé, la cohérence et la continuité?

In most West African countries, the official language and the language of education, science and technology is either English or French. These countries are not about to give up the English language or the other European languages in favour of African languages so it is important to foresee likely problems or study the parameters within which the languages have to operate. Choosing a career in a vernacular language then becomes a personal choice, and international organisations like UNESCO usually have to step in to offer financial support.

Although features of New Englishes have been vigorously discouraged by some linguists (Auden in Achebe, 1975:55) as well as by some colonial administrators (Clifford Prator, quoted in De Beaugrande, 2004: 04) the English language is taking

on a life of its own in countries like Hong Kong, Singapore, Africa, and in the Caribbean Islands, i.e. former colonies or territories that previously belonged to European powers. It is very difficult to insist that everyone should have the same linguistic attitudes or competence in a new world in which millions of people study in English and most of them go through school without ever meeting an English mother-tongue speaker. This is because English is no longer the *chasse gardée* of the United Kingdom. To the question "who owns English today", Ted Anthony (2000: 7) answers: Nigerians and Ghanaians, Liberians and Sierra Leonians, Singaporeans, Malaysians, Indians and Filipinos.

For the African writer, the choice of language is not an easy thing to decide. Vernacular languages exist alongside European languages. However people are using these European languages in such a way that they reflect their own African origin. The English language has demonstrated a lot of flexibility over the centuries. The African writer now believes that English can be used to 'carry the weight' of 'his African experiences', just like the black American James Baldwin wrote earlier in the twentieth century:

> My quarrel with the English language has been that the language reflected none of my experience. But now I began to see the matter another way …Perhaps the language was not my own because I had never attempted to use it, had only learned to imitate it. If this were so, then it might be made to bear the burden of my experience if I could find the stamina to challenge it, and me, to such a test.
>
> (Baldwin in Achebe, 1975: 103)

James Baldwin's concerns are also the concerns of many other writers all over previously colonized territories. According to Tom McArthur (1998: 50) there are 22 countries in Africa where English is the official or de facto national language. Some people even believe that "without English, the society won't function" (Anthony,

2000: 1). However, the English that writers like Ben Okri are using is mixed, and Kachru (1982: 333) acknowledges that this is a positive thing because "it is through…formal deviations that language acquires contextual appropriateness". It is worthy of interest to look at the complex choices that the writer has to make and how his work is translated for readers of other linguistic communities who live on the same continent and even beyond.

The syntax and semantics of the English language are different from those of African languages. It is interesting to find out how people use English on a daily basis, especially in the newly created African states. Research has to be carried out regularly to find out how people learn the language and what they do with it. Feedback is constantly necessary because it helps in the formulation of language policies, in language choice in meetings, in the media and in schools. John Spencer is among those who have called for more research into the language situation in Africa. In an essay titled *The Influence of West African languages on English*, Kirk-Green says:

> Our duty as linguists is to take up John Spencer's call, made at Ibadan in 1961, for research into how English and French are reacting to their new and constantly changing environment in Africa…not seeking to condemn or artificially to control, change and development in the English of West Africa…but, in accepting its legitimacy, to examine its particularities and the causes which lie behind them
>
> (1971: 127)

This research is an answer to that call. It is an examination of West African English in a postcolonial work of fiction and how it can be transferred to another European language in a former colonial context.

1.3.1 RESEARCH QUESTION

***The Famished Road,* like more and more novels in the postcolonial era, has elements of New Englishes that call for different linguistic and literary skills from the translator in translating them. What are the features of these Englishes in *The Famished Road* and how should translators of postcolonial works transfer them from English to French?**

1.3.2 SUB QUESTIONS

1. Is the use of New Englishes in *The Famished Road* a reflection of the socio-cultural reality in West Africa, and more particularly, in Nigeria?
2. What difficulties does such writing represent for translators?
3. How can translators of African fiction transfer such features from English to French?

1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

Africans have been grappling with the novel form as well as with prose in English for a long time. Lalage Brown (in Irele, 1971:37) mentions such works as *The Interesting Narrative of the life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa The African* which was published in 1789 and *Report of a Mission to the Interior* by George Ekem Ferguson, which was published in 1892. In British colonies, English was the language of business, education and government. However, it is only in 1962 that African writers started thinking consciously about their use of the English language. In that year, there was a writer's gathering in Makerene University styled 'A Conference of African Writers of English Expression'. From the debates about whether or not to use

English in their books, two opinions emerged. The Kenyan writer Ngugi Wa Thiongo (1981:27) insisted that:

> African Literature can only be written in African Languages. That is, the languages of the African peasantry and working class, the major alliance of classes in each of our nationalities and the agency for the coming inevitable revolutionary break with neo-colonization.

However, the matter is far more complex than just writing in a mother tongue if we factor the publisher and the target readership into this debate. This linguistic status quo has always posed a problem for writers with an international eye. We can also add that Heinemann has played a pivotal role in the growth of African literature. When the *African writers' series* was launched, Heinemann published from its London offices. Books like Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* (1966) and Nkem Nwankwo's *My Mercedes is Bigger Than Yours* (1966) were published in English under the African Writers' Series and read by thousands of people all over the world. There was also some translation of books by francophone writers like Ferdinand Oyono (1966) and Mongo Beti (1954) were also translated. Onitsha market literature had a certain level of success in vernacular languages in Nigeria; however, writers like D.O Fagunwa have not been studied outside their linguistic communities due to the language barrier. The writers who published their works with Heinemann certainly had more international success: Nkem Nwankwo (1966), Munonye (1966), Amadi (1966) and Okigbo (1962). Although Ngugi Wa Thiongo later opted to write in his mother tongue, all his novels have English translations. We can also add that in East Africa, Swahili is spoken in almost all countries and even as far inland as the Democratic Republic of Congo. So language policy would vary from one region to the other on the African continent.

The other opinion on choice of language, espoused by Chinua Achebe (1975: 100) and Gabriel Gbaingbaing Okara (1963: 8), was that the writer had a wider audience if he chose the English language over his mother tongue and that the English language was flexible enough to carry his thoughts, ideas and African experience. Chinua Achebe (1975:101/102) gives this example from his book *Arrow of God*:

> I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eyes there.
> If there is nothing in it, you will come back. But if there
> is something there, you will bring home my share.
> The world is like a Mask, dancing. If you want to see it well,
> you do not stand in one place. My spirit tells me that those
> who do not befriend the white man today will be saying
> had we known tomorrow.

This passage is written from an African perspective and it has been much quoted in the mother tongue versus English debate. The syntax resembles Chinua Achebe's first language, Ibo because it has been *nativised*. It is *in character* with the African setting of the novel. He gives us the same passage, but this time, from a European perspective.

> I am sending you as my representative among these people - just to
> be on the safe side in case the new religion develops. One has to
> move with the times or else one is left behind. I have a hunch
> that those who fail to come to terms with the white man may well
> regret their lack of foresight.
>
> (1975: 102)

The words in both extracts are English words. However, when we string them together, we notice that a European would most probably write the words in the second extract whereas the African would most probably write the words in the first text. The first extract contains symbols like a dancing mask and an emissary. In African culture, it is the tradition for people to send someone to be their ears and eyes when they cannot personally attend a meeting. Also, in traditional festivities, the mask

moves as the dancer twists and gyrates. It is the custom for people to change positions if they do not want to miss any bit of the action.

Bolland (1996: 3) has stated that 'language is in a constant state of becoming'. Although several languages exist side by side and most Africans never really master the language of the former colonial master, Bolland argues that "Heteroglossia has been resisted throughout history by forces 'that serve to unify and centralise the verbal-ideological world'" (1996: 3). So what we notice is that some people try as hard as possible to protect the former colonial masters' language from pollution while others believe that it is their right to change the language to suit their present need. But sometimes, as well, new trends in language are a sporadic development without any conscious guide or planner and reveal contrasting priorities:

> Language is therefore, at any moment, a 'contradiction-filled unity of two embattled tendencies', one towards centralisation, the other towards disunity and dispersal.
>
> (1996: 4)

I suppose that the 'disunity' referred to here is relative because complete centralisation is not always possible. The Law of Entropy says that 'disorder is a more natural state than order'. As this conflict reflects on the cultural scene, it also promotes cultural conflict. In fact, language and culture are intertwined.

The rise of postcolonial African literature happened around the same time as the rise in the world demand for translations and translators. Since the cultural turn in translation that started in the early eighties, translators are more aware that they do not translate only words. They now know that translation involves many concepts like

power and dominance as well as spreading of culture and ideology. When you transfer a message from one language to another, you are actually dealing with two systems:

> As translators and translation researchers, we are becoming increasingly aware that translation is not only a matter of 'transfer between cultures' but that it is also a place where cultures merge and create new spaces.
>
> (Wolf, 2002: 186)

The 'in-between', or the point where cultures merge (the pluricentre) "is particularly relevant in the context of postcolonialism and migration" (Wolf, 2002:188). It is not a place of harmony, far from it. It is a place of conflict and strife (Wolf, 2002: 189). Such conflicts revolve around notions like supremacy, inferiority, power and ideology relations. A translator might be neutral in his work or he/she might deliberately decide to mistranslate because he wields some degree of power in the translation process.

Translation plays an important role in literature. Literatures feed off each other, but for this to happen, books have to be translated. Most of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* for example, were translations and loose adaptations of the *Roman de la rose.* Aesop's fables influenced Jean de la Fontaine's *Fables*. "Emergence of one literature always occurs in relation to another literature" (Woodsworth, 1992: 58). Maybe that is why Emile Snyder (1985: 77) says that "we need more translators and more published translation". However, the manner in which this translation should be done deserves close attention. Translation embodies paradigms of cultural difference (Simon, 1992: 160) and "language is essentially rooted in the reality of the culture (Malinowski, in Katan, 1999: 72). "Language has a setting…language does not exist apart from culture" (1999: 72). Translation, which involves a linguistic activity, naturally reflects this reality:

> Like any human activity, it takes place in a specific social and historical context that informs and structures it, just as it informs

and structures other creative processes.

(Jacquemond, 1992: 139)

So as translators with a colonial background, we are going to look at what translation researchers like Niranjana (1992) and Douglas Robinson (1997a) have said about translation in a postcolonial context. Robinson, like other researchers, has pointed out that "in a postcolonial context, the power differentials must be added between the two cultures" (Robinson, 1997a: 28) and this makes translation very problematic. The approach suggested here is that to paint a picture that is both realistic and acceptable, the translator has to use the linguistic systems that already exist in the target language community. In this regard, we will look at Nord's functional approach in translation (1997) as well as Eugene Nida's theory of dynamic equivalence (1964).

The functional approach is not a new kind of translation (Nord, 1997: 4). It can be traced back to the Bible translators and their constant search for dynamic equivalence. Dynamic equivalence "tries to correct the shortcomings of word for word translating by translating not precisely what the original author wrote, but what he most likely meant" (The Bible Shelf, 2004). The functional approach is based on *skopostheorie* which looks at translation as a goal and purpose oriented activity (1997: 27). Other words related to the functional approach (1997: 28) are:

- Aim, which is the final result an agent intends to achieve by means of an action.
- Purpose, which is the provisional stage in the process of attaining an aim.

- Function refers to what a text means or is intended to mean from a receiver's point of view.
- Intention refers to "an aim-oriented plan of action".

The reason why the translator should constantly have the cultural context in mind is so that he can produce a text that is *in character* with the setting of the work of fiction he is translating. However, being functional does not mean chopping and changing at will, as Nord cautions (1997: 45):

> Functionalism does not mean that the waters of the Maine should generally be replaced by those of a Norwegian fjord, nor that cows' eyes should become deer's eyes or whatever the target culture's favourite animal is. Functionality simply means translators should be aware of these aspects and take them into consideration in their decisions.

Hybrid forms of the French language, born out of the contact between the French and African languages exist in Africa. In this research report, we are suggesting such linguistic forms for the translation of New Englishes into French. Nativised French has been used since René Maran published *Batouala, Véritable roman nègre* (1921). Most francophone Africans are familiar with Guy Tirolien's poem "*prière d'un petit enfant nègre*" in which the poet writes with an African twist. One of the lines in the poem reads thus:

je veux *dormir ma sieste* au pied des lourds manguiers

(1961: 41)

(Italics mine)

This line and the rest of the poem surprised a lot of people when *Balles D'or* was published in 1961. It was proof of independence on the part of the writer, maybe a little stubbornness as well because one of the Académie Française's duties is to

vigorously discourage any corruption of the French language. Such usage shows proof of *nativisation* and *indigenisation* of the French language and it reminds us of these words by an unidentified Congolese writer, quoted in the *Nouvel Espaces* textbook:

> Je n'écris pas le Français, j'écris en Français
>
> (Nouvel Espaces Hachette, 1995: 212)

The writer asserts his belonging to a different linguistic culture even if he intends to own the language of the colonial master and use it. This strong desire to assert identity is reflected in language use all over francophone Africa. Thus it is common to hear sentences such as "Tu vas me sentir" (used to threaten someone with a hiding) that are considered unacceptable in *Le Bon Français*.

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research report is placed within the context of prescriptive translation studies. True, the main work entails a study of ***The Famished Road***. However, we must stress that the primary perspective is a translator's perspective. Translation has become a big part of African literature because the continent has two major languages: English and French. Consequently, exchange between the two linguistic groups is necessary and sometimes imperative if the writer wants to have a reasonably significant readership for his books. Studies such as these are meant to aid the translator in his work. This research report is a translator's look at a book that falls within the framework of postcolonial African literature. Some people talk of **neo-African literature**, which is

> … les oeuvres littéraires écrits qui reflètent, soit par leur style, soit par leur thématique la civilisation et la culture actuelle de l'Afrique subsaharienne.
> Ces oeuvres sont une expression artistique d'une culture née de la rencontre

du monde noir avec le monde occidental.

(Nordman-Seiler, 1976: 17)

The aspects of style we have chosen to look at are the elements of new Englishes in *The Famished Road*. The *zeitgeist* of the African terrain has imposed a new way of looking at things and a new way of using language to express realities. Some artists have decided to take English to another level and include new features in it. They are buoyed by linguistic trends in the world today. These features have to be factored into the work of the translator and I suppose that his success or failure also depends on how well he approaches them.

Although New Englishes can be sub-divided into various Englishes like Hong Kong English, Standard Singaporean English, Cameroonian English, Nigerian English, Jamaican English, they generally share the same features. We will undertake a text analysis of *The Famished Road* to look at these features (taken from De Beaugrande's paper *The New Englishes (2004)* and from Platt, Weber and Ho (1984)). They include:

a. Lexical features:

1. **Borrowing**: Ben Okri does not hesitate to use words like *ogogoro* that do not exist in the western world or in the diction of speakers of English who live outside Nigeria. To talk about this local gin in his novel, he had to invent a word for it or borrow from his native language. He chose to borrow.

2. **Loan translations**: in the West African context, *spirit child* would be a loan translation of *Abiku* which is a child from the spirit child, which usually decided to torment its parents. So each time it is born, it dies again, only to come back later. Azaro, the hero of *The Famished Road*, is a spirit child.

3. **Hybrids**: these are concepts that are caught between English and the local language. For example *house phone* as opposed to cell phone. Ben Okri uses words like *barfront* (375).

4. **New** coinage: for example *cousin brother,* which is used several times in *The Famished Road*.

5. **New meaning**: Here, we usually have structures of the English language being used in new or more specialized contexts. 'Trouble', for example, is used in a new context in The Famished Road. It is personalised:
    - Trouble has arrived (392)

b. Idiomatic expressions:

Here we are talking about structures like:

- Rub my back, I rub your own

c. Discourse features:

The 'eh' particle is the most common example of this. It is a common phenomenon in the speech of most of the characters.

d. Phonology:

This is usually in oral language. However, Ben Okri uses phonology in the novel and represents it with letters. 'O' is used to stress what one is saying:

- Warn your husband-o (206). In this episode, the landlord has come to warn Azaro's father not to meddle in politics, else he would be thrown out of his (landlord's) compound. The 'o' suffix of insistence is used in Anglophone as well as in Francphone West Africa.

e. Grammar

Ben Okri consistently makes use of correct grammar. It is in his use of lexical features that he deviates from standard usage. However, he sometimes borrows from the structure of Pidgin English or the indigenous Urhobo and Yoruba languages. The following sentence is one such example:

- I slept and woke up.

The sentence has no logical break between falling asleep and waking up from sleep. It is represented in the same stretch like one idea.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

This research is an analysis of *The Famished Road* for features of New Englishes and a reflection on how to transfer such features into French. The following steps are followed:

A text analysis of the novel is carried out using the criteria outlined in section 5 above. The purpose of this is to highlight their cultural specificity and to discuss the kind of approach that a translator should adopt in transferring them from one language to another.

Next, we look at what researchers in translation studies have published on intercultural negotiations and suggested approaches to the translation of phenomena like New Englishes; aspects like colonialism, post-colonialism and culture will be included in this discussion on translation.

After that, we suggest some approaches to the translation of New Englishes in African literature and state the major conclusions and the findings of our research report.

CHAPTER TWO

2.1.1 Definition of terms

Several terms are used in this report which play an important role in the study and the context within which our research report is placed. They require definition. They include: West African (and African) literature, negritude, postcolonialism and postcolonial studies, colonialism, nativisation and indigenisation.

2.2.1 West African (and African) literature

Through the years, there have been debates on what is and what qualifies as African literature. This question first emerged as serious food for thought in the African literature symposium of June 1962 at Makerere University. During that conference, delegates wondered whether African literature was literature produced in Africa or about Africa, whether it had to embrace the whole continent or only south of the Sahara, and whether it was supposed to be written in indigenous African languages or whether it could include Afrikaans, English, Arabic, French, Portuguese, etc. (Achebe, 1975: 91). Participants left the symposium without a definition for African literature. Sandra Barkan (1985: 35-43) has tried to define African literature by studying questionnaires on criteria for the definition of African literature completed by members of the African Literature Association. Most of the authors and critics who responded felt that the following criteria were very important if one were to define African literature: the setting, the racial origin of the author, the part of the continent (all of Africa or only sub-Saharan Africa), the theme, and the language used. Her conclusion is that "African literature continues to be in the process of defining". It is

for this reason that Jahnheinz Jahn prefers to talk of Neo-African literature, which is "the heir of two traditions: traditional African literature and Western literature" (1968: 22).

For the purposes of this research report, whenever reference is made to West African literature, we mean literature written about any part of West Africa by a West African. It follows then that it is possible to have West African literature in French or West African literature in English.

2.2.2 Negritude

Negritude was the first major socio-cultural and literary movement in black African consciousness. The negritude movement actually started in 1932 when Etienne Lero, René Menil and Jules Monnerot founded the journal *Légitime Défense* which encouraged the principle of 'thinking black' (Blair, 1976: 22). Only the first edition of *Légitime Défense* ever saw the light of day; however, it left a lasting impression on the black students from French overseas territories.

The word negritude was used for the first time by Aimé Césaire in *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, when he wrote:

> Ma négritude n'est pas une Pierre, sa surdité ruée contre la clameur du jour
> Ma négritude n'est pas une taie d'eau morte sur l'œil mort de la terre
> Ma négritude n'est ni une tour ni une cathédrale
>
> (In Nordman-Seiler, 1976: 18)

Léopold Sédar Senghor's definition of the term was based on the socio-cultural realities of the black world (Nordman-Seiler, 1976: 17):

> La négritude c'est l'ensemble des valeurs culturelles du monde noir, telles qu'elles s'expriment dans la vie, les institutions et les œuvres des noirs.

Senghor, Aimé Césaire, and René Maran played a major role in shaping negritude literature.

2.2.3 Postcolonialism

The term postcolonialism is synonymous with postcolonial studies, which does not really have an exact definition (Robinson, 1997a: 14/15) because it could be any of the following three notions:

- The study of Europe's former colonies since independence; how they have responded to, accommodated, resisted or overcome the cultural legacy of colonialism during independence.
- The study of Europe's former colonies since they were colonized; how they have responded to, accommodated, resisted or overcome the cultural legacy of colonialism during independence.
- The study of all cultures/societies/countries/nations in terms of their power relations with other cultures/etc; how conqueror cultures have bent conquered cultures to their will; how previous colonies have responded to, accommodated, resisted or overcome the cultural legacy of colonialism during independence.

The term postcolonialism could be defined as "the social, political, economic, and cultural practices that arise in response and resistance to colonialism" (DeHay, 2004:1). The important words that recur in all the above definitions are 'resistance', 'response' and colonialism'.

2.2.4 Colonialism

The word colonialism refers to the system in which "a state claims sovereignty over territories outside its own boundaries, often to facilitate economic domination over their resources, labour and other aspects" (the online WordIQ Dictionary and

Encyclopedia, 2004). The same web page adds that colonialism can also refer to the "set of beliefs that are used to legitimise or promote this system, especially the belief that the culture and religion of the coloniser are superior to those of the colonised".

2.2.5 Nativisation

The term nativisation is synonymous with Igboisation, Yorubaisation, Sanskritisation, and Kannadaisation (in Kachru, 1986: 160). So in South Africa, we can talk of Zuluisation or Xhoisaisation and in Cameroon, we can talk of Doualaisation, Komisation, and Buluisation among others, depending on the speaker, the region and the languages involved.

Kachru (1986: 21-22) defines nativisation as:

> The result of those productive linguistic innovations which are determined by the localised functions of a second language variety, the "culture of conversation" and communicative strategies in new situations, and the "transfer" from local languages.

He admits that nativised forms of language have essentially been viewed as *deficiency* (1986: 22) but warns that it is wrong to lump all cases of nativisation under *deficiency* because mistakes are different from deviations (1986: 29). Terms like localisation and indigenisation also refer to the influencing of a foreign language by local and indigenous languages.

2.3 A survey of West African Literature

In most African communities, literature is a way of life. This is manifested especially in song and dance. People sing or recite poems when they are working on farms, in factories, community projects or when they are protesting against one thing or the other. However, it is generally agreed that the novel form was imported. Several forms of writing existed before and during colonialism. In most of the Hausa states as

well as those which lay in former kingdoms like Niger and Mali, Arabic was the language of the literate elite. Sultan Njoya of the Bamoun kingdom invented his own form of writing. However, since most people were illiterate, literature was never recorded on paper. It was passed down from griot to griot and from generation to generation. The novel form came with colonialism and education (O.R Dathorne, 1976: 53):

> In Africa, the novel is the only literary form that has been totally imported and imposed over and above development from an indigenous pattern.

Africans delved into the novel form out of a mixture of curiosity, the need to assert their identities and the need for a weapon in the fight against colonialism (Julien, 1986:1):

> Who will forget that the first, now classic, West African novels and poems in European languages were conceived in response to colonialism and the attendant 'Orientalist' view of Africa promoted by European writers?

Joseph Ephraim Caseley-Haford's *Ethiopia Unbound*, which was first published in 1911 is unashamedly militant and even has the following sub-title: *Studies in Race Emancipation*. Some of the chapters in the book are: The black man's burden (1969: 147), Race emancipation, which is dealt with in three chapters (1969: 161, 167 and 179). O.R Dathorne (1976: 54) notes that although it is the first long piece of narrative in English, some critics have said that it is not the first West African novel. According to them, it is an anthropological study disguised as a novel. Those critics usually give the honour of the first West African novel in English to R.E Obeng's *Eighteenpence* (Dathorne, 1976: 54), which was published in 1943.

West African literature in French met with international success long before West African literature in English. This can be attributed to the policy of assimilation.

France regarded its colonial territories and colonised people as part of France whereas the British had a strictly business relationship with its colonies and governed them using the policy of Indirect Rule (Davidson, 1965: 393). Africans, who were studying in France and found themselves in a situation of racial minority and discrimination, gathered under the banner of negritude and started writing. The West African Léopold Sédar Senghor who was later to become the president of Senegal played a major role in the negritude movement. Some of the first negritude books written by West Africans are Senghor's *Anthologie de la Poésie Nègre et Malgache*, which came out in 1948, Birago Diop's *Contes d'Amadou Koumba* (published in 1947) David Diop's *Coups de Pilon* (published in 1956) and Camara Laye's *l'Enfant Noir* (1953) and *Le Regard du Roi* (1954) which Ezekiel Mphahlele described as 'the great African novel' (in Achebe, 1975: 90). These writers and others from the Antilles like Guy Tirolien (1961) and René Maran (1921) influenced and inspired the writing of a host of writers in Africa, some of who never actually went to study in France: Elolongue Epanya Yondo (1960), Eza Boto (1954), Ferdinand Oyono (1966) and many others.

The negritude movement was a cultural and literary movement that gathered a lot of writers under its banner. However, not all francophone writers of the early twentieth century joined this movement. Bakary Diallo, whose *Force Bonté* is often described as the first Negro novel (Blair, 1976: 15) was certainly not a negritudist. Gérard-Felix Tchicaya U'Tamsi never joined the negritude movement although he lived and wrote in France.

Nordman-Seiler (1976: 15) confirms Davidson's assertion that British interest in Africa was primarily economic. That is why Anglophone writing blossomed only in the early sixties. Anglophones had never been assimilated, and so they did not

understand why someone would ask them to go back to their roots (1976: 48). They never joined the negritude movement and Soyinka even said that a tiger did not have to proclaim its tigritude; it just had to throw itself on its prey and devour it (Dathorne, 1976: 219 and Jahn, 1968: 265-266). Before 1950, West African literature in English was mainly poetry written by poets like Dei Anang (1952) and Roland Dempster (2004). The coppersmith Amos Tutuola wrote the hugely successful *The Palm Wine Drinkard* in 1952. It was published by *Faber and Faber* and translated into French, Italian and German.

The launching of journals like *The Horn* (University of Ibadan), *Black Orpheus* and *Transition* played a major role in encouraging Anglophone West Africans to write on what was known as the "African personality" (Nordman-Seiler, 1976: 47), that is, the African in his new socio-cultural and political reality. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, which was published in 1959, became the first publication in the *African* Writers' Series, which has become the African and Carribean Writers' Series. Chinua Achebe's success helped to garner an interest in African literature and the world soon discovered writers like T.M. Aluko (1967), Nkem Nwankwo (1966), Elechi Amadi (1966), and Francis Selormey. Christopher Okigbo (1962) was regarded as the greatest African poet of his time and the playwright Wole Soyinka won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1986. The old guard has since given way to writers like Linus Asong (1993), Ben Okri, Karen King Aribisala (1988) and Biyi Bandele Thomas (1991).

2.4.1 Ben Okri: A short biography

Ben Okri is a man of many talents. He is a poet, novelist and short-story writer. He was born in 1959 in Mina in northern Nigeria to an Urhobo father and an Igbo

mother. His first school was the Children's Home School in Sapele. Shortly after he was born, his father won a scholarship to study law in England. He took his family with him to England. Ben Okri's earliest years were spent in Peckam in south London. He attended John Donne primary school. In London, he developed a liking for comic books.

After his father had finished his education in the Inner Temple, the Okris returned to Nigeria. He continued his education in Ibadan and later in Warri, in Urhobo College. In 1966, there was a military coup d'état in Nigeria, and in 1967, there was a civil war between Ojukwu's Biafra and the federal republic of Nigeria.

By the age of 14, Ben Okri had finished his secondary education. He spent about five years writing short stories for women's journals and newspapers. He also started work on his first novel, *Flowers and Shadows*. He did most of his writing at night, since he held a day job as a clerk in ICI. He wanted to study science at tertiary level, but no Nigerian university would offer him a place.

In 1978, Ben Okri won a scholarship and moved back to England where he studied English and philosophy at the University of Essex. His second spell in England was full of hardship. He lost his scholarship when the government of El Hajj Shehu Shagari decided to curtail overseas spending. He went to live with his uncle in south London. His uncle's house was knocked down and Ben Okri took to the streets. He slept wherever he could, on the streets and in the railway stations. Most of the time, he stared starvation in the face.

He soon found employment in the BBC's African service at Bush House and as poetry editor for the weekly magazine *West Africa*. In 1986, he published *Incidents at*

the Shrine and was immediately propelled into the mainstream literary circuit. *Incidents at the Shrine* won both the *Paris Review's Aga Khan* prize for fiction and the Commonwealth writers Prize for Africa. Two years later, he published *Stars of the New Curfew,* which was also well received by the public. *The Famished Road* was published in 1991. It entrenched his unique style and won him the prestigious Booker Prize. He has since published other novels like *Songs of Enchantment* (a sequel to *The Famished Road*), *Infinite Riches* and *Astonishing the Gods*.

2.4.2 Language in West Africa

2.5.1 Co-existence of ethnic and European languages

Bokamba (1982: 77) acknowledges that "Africa is considered today to be perhaps the most multilingual region in the world". As proof, he indicates that an estimated 1000-1,140 languages are spoken in Africa today. French is used in a total of 24 African countries (McArthur, 1998: 47), three of which are shared with English. English is used in 22 countries, Portuguese is used in six territories and Spanish is used in two territories. In some territories, the languages have official status, and in some, they do not (McArthur, 1998: 47).

This linguistic multiplicity makes communication between peoples of different tribes and nations very difficult to manage. West Africa is a microcosm of this macrocosm. It is a hotchpotch of languages which have different status and which are used at various times for different purposes. Attitudes, prejudice and bias and the vast number of indigenous languages make it difficult to choose a common language. Some people think that it is a mockery to keep using English and that it is not possible to think originally in someone else's language (Efurosibina Adegbija, 1994: 68). At the same

time, some others feel that the elimination of English in their country would lead to tribal disunity and ethnic chauvinism.

2.5.2 Literature in indigenous languages

Due to lack of interest on the part of African researchers, critics and writers, there is very little data on African fiction. Searches on the Internet reveal lists that are not exhaustive (see Appendixes D and E[1]) and publishing houses like Macmillan, Penguin and Heinemann are only interested in texts written in English. And even with these texts, they do not have a database of books they have translated (see Appendix C[2]). So for want of up-to-date information, we use data which is thirty-two years' old.

In a survey of African literary works, Jahn (1968: 284) points out that literature in indigenous languages has been written in only 41 of the 700 African languages. Most of these works are from southern Africa and are written in the following languages: Southern Sotho (98 books), Xhosa (72 books), Zulu (41 books), Nyanja in Malawi (26), Northern Sotho (41), Bemba in Zambia (22 books), Shona in Zimbabwe (16 books), Tswana (16 books) and Venda (13 books). Other languages include Lozi, Tsonga, Ndebele, Tumbuka, Tonga, Luvale, Tswa, Chewa and Lanje. In West Africa, the indigenous languages with the most publications are Twi (40 books), Yoruba (27 books), and Hausa with 9 books. Other languages like Ewe, Fanti, Duala, Bulu, Ibo, Ga and Akuapim have fewer publications.

[1] Appendix D is a list of books published by Heinemann in the African and Caribbean Writers' series while Appendix E is a list of Africa's best books from the website of the Zimbabwe International Book Forum. Both lists are just an indication of the books that have been published over the years. Appendix C for example, does not even list all the books by Heinemann. Writers like Mbella Sone Dipoko (1970, 1972) and Francis Bebey (1971) do not even make the list.

[2] Appendix C indicates the hits I got from searches on the Index Translationum website. This Website is kept by UNESCO. It is the largest bank of translated documents in the world. I searched the site for information on translated texts by known writers like Chinua Achebe and Mongo Beti and got nothing.

The result of the survey above is obvious: to choose to write only in an indigenous language in West Africa would lead to financial ruin for the writer if one agrees with Nordman-Seiler (1976: 48) that "la littérature a toujours un aspect commercial: l'auteur veut que son œuvre soit lue mais aussi qu'elle soit vendue". In West Africa, no known writer survives on literary works produced in an indigenous language. In the fifties and sixties, the Onitsha Market literature, produced in the Yoruba language flourished. Some of these publications sold up to 50.000 copies (Kirk-Greene, 1971: 130). This was the time of D.O. Fagunwa. However, that market literary culture has since died down. English has taken over as the language of literature. You have to go to East Africa and books produced in Kiswahili to get anything similar to the Onitsha market literature. This status quo has perpetuated a linguistic reflection: which language should be used in creative writing, the indigenous languages or the European languages? Most African writers living in Africa and in the Diaspora have opted to write in European languages.

2.5.3 Why African writers write in European languages

Perhaps the first reason West Africans started producing literature in European languages is that it is in these languages that they discovered literacy and literature; gradually they realised that the ability to read and write could be used as a weapon. The curriculum had books by writers like Charles Dickens, Rider Haggard, John Buchan, and Walter Scott (Wa Thiongo, 1981: 12). Education gave them a tool to fight colonialism just like it gave Caliban the means to curse his master Prospero:

> You taught me language: and my profit on't
> Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you

> For learning me your language!
>
> (Jahn, 1968: 240)

Centuries earlier, Olaudah Equiano had used the English language to write a novel about his journey from Africa to the Western world, as a slave and then as a freed slave. Local administrators, trained to run colonies, used the language of their masters to fight for equality. The native also used the newly acquired English language to show the colonial master that he was his equal (Casely-Hayford, 1911: 164).

Chinua Achebe has said that it is important to give credit where it is due and that the only reason why we can actually talk of African unity is that when Africans gather, they have few languages in which they can communicate: English, French and Arabic (1975: 95). He cannot blame those who choose to write in European languages because the colonial masters created the entities we have as countries in the first place:

> Those African writers who have chosen to write in English or French are not unpatriotic smart alecks with an eye on the main Chance - outside their own countries. They are by-products of the same process that made the new nation-states of Africa.
>
> (1975: 95)

The literature of the new African writers should not be discouraged because it is not sterile at all. He quotes such writers as Christopher Okigbo and J.P Clark (1975: 100) to show that Africans can write beautiful literature in European languages. Achebe acknowledges that an African should not strive to write like a European and says that the kind of English he uses in his novels is "a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surrounding" (1975: 103). This 'new' language is neither completely foreign nor indigenous (Kester Echenia, 2000: 136).

For the French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre, the socio-cultural and historic circumstances ordained that the African writer should write in a European language. It was a decision forced down his throat. Writing in a European language was a Hobson's choice for the African writer:

> Ils ont utilisé la langue de leurs colonisateurs-« ne croyez pas qu'ils l'aient choisie »- et ce pour se largement faire entendre. De plus, les masses Africains ne sachant pas lire, on ne les aurait pas atteintes beaucoup plus en écrivant dans leurs langues. Enfin, les éditeurs européens ne s'intéressaient évidemment qu'à des œuvres écrites dans leurs langues.
>
> (Quoted in Kesteloot, 1967: 10)

What Sartre is saying in effect is that the African writer needed a universal language for his ideas. At the same time, he had the responsibility of coming up with something his publisher could sell. That fact is even truer in an era of globalisation and the notion of the global village: the fewer the languages the better, and if you use a language everyone can read, the better for your book. If African writers had produced protest literature in Igbo, Wollof or Douala, western readers would never have read it and their cause would have had an insignificant audience!

Different levels of language competence play a role in the question of language choice several generations after independence. In section 1.2.3 we mentioned the writer Abdelkebir Khatibi who writes in *La Mémoire Tatouée* that he grew up in a multilingual context in which it was difficult to master any language. Many writers have experienced this linguistic schizophrenia. In some cases, the other's language becomes the vehicle in which the subject thinks:

> Je pense en français; je m'exprime mieux en français que dans ma langue maternelle.
>
> (Senghor, 1964: 359).

At the boarding school I went to, most students often confessed to not being able to speak their indigenous languages at all. In South Africa, black children who attend 'Model C' schools (where the fees and academic standards are high) are regularly accused of neglecting their indigenous languages and trying to speak like black Americans. So this is one answer to writers like Ngugi Wa Thiongo, who insist that Africans should write only in African languages: some writers are not using their mother tongues because they are simply not proficient in them! However, that does not make them less African.

The English-speaking world has become more receptive to creative writing in non-native varieties of English (Kachru, 1986: 122). Such acceptance would naturally create a comfort zone in which the writer continues to use the same language he has been used to. At the same time, it facilitates the emergence of such literatures as African English literature, Philippine English literature and Indian English literature. Such literatures are not only different in name, but also in style and cultural context (Kachru, 1986: 122).

This chapter has revealed that the very words that we use every day (like post-colonialism for example) should not always be taken at face value. The difficulties the translator has to face do not lie only in the text he is translating. There are always other factors that can be transcribed from the history of the person who is speaking or writing at a particular point in time. This is important because literature is an expression of the habits and feelings of a people at a particular point in time.

Secondly, the translator has to face the major problem of the *tabula rasa* that stares back at him when he tries to get reference documents to work with. Little has been done to systematise the work that has gone into creating African literature. More research has to be done to prevent the makeshift treatment that is given to the continent's literature. In the next chapter, we look at Ben Okri's style as well as his use of New Englishes. The aim of this exercise is to use the material as a reference document in our proposal of a translation approach to the translation of New Englishes.

CHAPTER THREE

3.1 A summary of *The Famished Road*

The Famished Road is a story of the adventures of Azaro[3], spirit-child, or to use the appropriate Yoruba[4] word for such a being, an Abiku child. Azaro lives on the outskirts of a town that is unidentified, but which is probably Lagos around the period of independence. His parents are very poor. His father is a load-carrier and a boxer and his mother is an itinerant hawker. The story spans eight books.

Azaro keeps falling into trances of revelry and wandering off into the forest and into strange lands. In fact, the entire story is a string of dreams linked together by the earthly struggles of humans. Azaro's friends in the spirit world have vowed to make him return to where he truly belongs: the land of spirits. '*The great king*' sends messengers to him. His parents have a hard time keeping him on earth. They even throw a huge party which they cannot afford to keep him around. Madame Koto, who owns a bar, and who is one of the richest persons around, asks him to frequent her place of business to attract customers.

Madame Koto's bar and the streets of the poor neighbourhood are the settings of some major face-offs between The Party of the Rich (to which she belongs) and the Party of the Poor. During a campaign, members of the Party of the Rich hand out contaminated milk to the members of Azaro's community. When Azaro's father

[3] The name Azaro is derived from the Biblical Lazarus. He died and after several days, Jesus came and raised him from the dead.

[4] The Yoruba are a tribe found in the eastern part of Nigeria and in Benin. They have a strong attachment to their ontological and cosmologic beliefs. Descendants of slaves captured from the ancient Benin Yoruba kingdom are still attached to these beliefs in places as far away as Brazil and the United States of America to this day. The Abiku is one aspect of the Yoruba ontology. It has been used by other Nigerian writers like Wole Soyinka (in the book Abiku) and J.P Clark.

discovers this, he alerts the entire community. He even becomes the defender of the rights of the poor. After a particularly tough fight with a spirit, he spends three days on a sick bed, redreaming the world. The entire eighth book is about this dream.

The adventures of Azaro and his parents are continued in *Songs of Enchantment* and in *Infinite Riches*.

3.2 Ben Okri's style

There are very few books on the work of Ben Okri (Oka Moh, 2000: 04). Critical essays and books are very few; most texts on Ben Okri can be found on the Internet and not in libraries. His writing is relatively new, although it has been thirteen years since he won the Booker prize. I say 'relatively' in comparison to older and more established West African writers like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka and Ferdinand Oyono.

A lot of the writing that goes on in Africa is based on the fantastic. This tradition comes straight from the fireside tales and oral literature that are handed down from generation to generation. In these tales, realism is not important; fantasy and magic are the main ingredients (Gérard, 1985: 23):

> Third world societies usually function on a small scale: they are clanic, tribal societies where everybody knows everybody else so that social constraints inside the group are particularly effective. They are not only pre-literate, they are pre-urban, pre-industrial, pre-scientific. Their only verbal medium is the spoken word. *They cannot account for the realities of their environment except in metaphysical terms and they cannot hope to act upon their environment except through magic.*
>
> (Italics mine).

The Famished Road fits the description above. Some of the characters (Azaro and his father) feel that the world is very corrupt. The only way to climb up the social ladder is to join the detested Party of the Rich. They cannot have any real impact on the world because they are living in abject poverty and belong to the Party of the Poor. To compensate for their poverty, they spend most of their time dreaming. Azaro's father plans to build houses for the poor, tar all the roads, clear away all the rubbish in the streets, open massive stores to sell food cheaply to the poor, become a musician, bring free education to the poor, become head of state, or an invisible ruler of a very educated nation (408-409). He even listens while his son reads tales about Sundjata the Great[5] and Shaka Zulu[6].

The local cosmology and the ontology are an important part of the local system. When a man is sick, a herbalist has to fortify his body while his spirit wrestles for his life in "the Land of the Fighting Ghosts" (404). Sirens and chimeras wander abroad in full view of humans (460). People believe in Christ (19) but still cling to local deities like the Priest of Roads (497). When people die, they are transported to the land of the dead by 'the ferryman' (335).

Some concepts which the writer mentions are strange to the English language, so he has to make up new words for them, enriching the English language in the process. Daria Tunca of the Université de Liège has described Ben Okri's style in these words:

> A projection of hopes for the world based on the release of mankind's as yet untapped mental and physical resources.
>
> (2004: 02)

[5] Sundjata was the leader of the Mandigo people of West Africa in the thirteenth century.
[6] Shaka is considered to be the greatest king to have ruled the kingdom of the Zulus. His reign happened in the early nineteenth century and he was assassinated by Dingane in 1828.

His novel reads like a mystical piece. There is no dividing line between the world of the living and the world of spirits. Human beings intermingle with ghoulish creatures. In one scene, Azaro is walking home when he sees a messenger of 'the great king' (66). This messenger is unnaturally hairy and his face sits upside down on his neck. In another scene, we meet the 'boy-king' who has a palace of 'turquoise mirrors' (245).

Symbols play a major role. The Nigerian nation is described as an 'Abiku nation' (494). It has not settled on one face, it keeps metamorphosing. Azaro himself is a symbol of survival and the struggle between men and gods. The Party of the Rich, Madame Koto and the Landlord represent the new elite that has replaced the colonial master and goes to the poor only when it needs votes. The Party of the Poor, Black Tyger (Azaro's father) and The International Photographer represent the champions of the poor who will do everything to make sure that their kind gets a fair deal.

The psychedelic visions in the novel show the feebleness of human existence and highlight the plight of new city dwellers as they try to pick themselves up from poverty. Ben Okri's style is based on the urban narrative technique, the criticism of the government's shortcomings, and finally on magic and fantasy (Oka Moh, 2000: 71).

The Famished Road can be read like an allegory, a battle between good and evil. One scene in particular (120-125) captures the battle between good and evil. Politicians come to a desolate part of town to campaign for the Party of the Rich. After their campaign they distribute milk to the poor people. The impatient crowd fights for the handouts. The milk is poured on people and transforms them into wraiths. Later the

milk is found to be contaminated with insect larvae. The entire poor section of town falls sick. Azaro and his father are the ones who discover that the milk is bad. This incident is the defining moment of Azaro's father's life. Thereafter he becomes the champion of the poor. He challenges the government agents (the forces of evil) every time he gets the opportunity. All the rich characters are on the side of the antagonists: Madame Koto, The Landlord, and The thugs of the Party of the Rich.

Azaro's father is constantly arguing with The Landlord. The latter, who is not happy that Azaro's father has not joined his party, looks for the slightest chance to confront him. This soon comes when some tenants harass Azaro's mum and ask for the money his father owes them. Azaro's father threatens them with a beating. When The Landlord comes (in Azaro's father's absence), he says:

> Tell your husband…that if he repeats what he did last night, I
> will throw him out. I don't care if he is called Black Cricket.
> I myself am a lion. If necessary, I will send my boys to beat him up.
>
> (100)

In the spirit of most allegories, the physical portraits of the characters are not really developed. Importance is placed on what they represent as concepts rather than on what they represent as human beings. No character's physical portrait is developed, not even the main character Azaro. Even the 'Madame' of Madame Koto, the bar owner is the name that is used for 'shebeen queens' and restaurant owners all over West Africa.

3.3 Language in *The Famished Road*

3.3.1 Standard English

Most of *The Famished Road* is written in Standard English. It is not always easy to say what Standard English is because the English language does not have a watchdog (like the Académie Française that watches over the French language) to decide on usage. By Standard English here, we mean what Trudgill defines in *Sociolinguistics: An introduction to language and Society*:

> Standard English is that variety of English which is usually used in print, and which is normally taught in schools and to non-native speakers learning the language. It is also the variety which is normally spoken by educated people and used in news broadcasts and other similar situations. The difference between standard and non-standard, it should be noted, has nothing in principle to do with differences between formal and colloquial language, or with concepts such as "bad language".
>
> (1983: 7)

It is worth noting, as Trudgill indicates above, that non-standard varieties are not necessarily "bad English". They are just different and "fulfil a real need" (Platt, Weber and Ho, 1984: 88) in the linguistic contexts in which they are used. Such non-standard usage features prominently in *The Famished Road*.

3.3.2 Ben Okri's Use of language

Ben Okri's language has been described as 'simple, lucid, and image laden' (Douglas Killam and Ruth Howe, 2003: 3). His use of language indicates two things: that he has a great mastery of the English language and this is explained by the fact that he has spent and studied most of his life in London; at the same time, he asserts his belonging to Africa in his choice and use of local words.

It is worth noting that most of his deviations, or his indigenisation of the English language occur in the form of lexis rather than syntax. Nigerian English is ever-present and anchors the book within the context of post-colonial literature. Most of these words lack English equivalents. This explains why the author uses them in their local structures or creates English neologisms for them. There are many such examples in *The Famished Road*, especially single lexical units. A subtle switch between standard and non-standard usage can be noticed all through the novel. In the next section, we study these items under the following headings: phonological features, lexical features, idiomatic and discourse features, grammatical and semantic features.

3.4 PHONOLOGICAL FEATURES

3.4.1 The 'O' particle

- **CLEAR THE WAY–O (154)**

The 'O' suffix, added to an utterance is usually meant to emphasize what one is saying. The stress falls on the complete utterance and not on a word alone. In the example above, it is attached to the word 'way' for reasons of representation. It would have been inappropriate to write 'CLEARTHEWAY – O'. Here, it is a suffix of warning. A lady is carrying a basin of hot water, which she intends to pour on some politicians who distributed contaminated milk to the public. So she asks people to clear the way…for their own safety! If they do not heed her command, they might get burned.

- **Run! Run! –O! (223)**

'O' in this context also means "run, else you will be beaten". A thug has just told Madame Koto that he is going to marry her. This upsets her and she goes for a broom. The people in Madame Koto's bar urge the thug to run, otherwise he is going to be beaten up by Madame Koto.

'O' does not refer to danger or warning in all situations. It can be used to show intensity in a positive way. 'I like that car – o' means 'I love that car very much'.

3.4.1 THE 'EH' QUESTION PARTICLE

'Eh' is not new to the English language. It is listed here because of its frequency in the West African's language and because it is pronounced differently. In West Africa, it is pronounced like 'hien' in French. The question particle (Platt et al, 1984: 128) is used about 50 times in the novel. It usually comes at the end of a statement or question. It can be compared to 'n´est–ce pas' in French and to 'Hey' in Black South African English. In French 'n´est–ce pas' is a structure that can be used in a multitude of situations: Isn't she, aren't we, aren't they, isn't it, don't you think so, okay? Alright? 'Hey' plays the same function in Black South African English.

3.4.2 'EH' to indicate a rhetorical question

- 'Do you think of us, eh? How we sweat to feed you, to pay the rent, to buy cloths, eh? All day, like a mule, I carry loads. My head is breaking, my brain is shrinking, all so that I can feed you, eh?'
  (119)

Azaro is a spirit-child who has wandered away from home, causing anxiety in his parents. When he returns home, his father says the text above. He does not

really expect the boy to say anything. He is rebuking him for leaving home and wandering about. Although Azaro's mother remains mum about it, knowing that he is a spirit-child who can leave anytime he wants, his father is fed up with all the sacrifices he has to make to keep the boy happy.

However, Azaro's mother musters enough courage to upbraid her son's unruly behavior when he throws a stone and breaks the old man's glass window. She asks a series of rhetorical questions:

> 'Why did you break that window, eh? Do you want to kill us, eh? Do you see how poor we are, eh? Have you no pity on your father? Do you know how much glass cost, eh? (321)

At this stage Azaro's father tries hard to conceal his anger. He shows how angry he is only after the broken window has been repaired. These tags are not unique in African Englishes, westerners also use them. However, in new English, it takes on a more specialized usage, and adopts what De Beaugrande calls 'New Meaning' (1999:03). It is more natural for people to use such forms rather than structures like 'are we', are you' and 'isn't it' that do not exist in African languages.

3.4.3 The particle 'eh' which necessitates an answer

Sometimes 'eh' takes a different dimension and changes the statement to a why question:

- 'Why do I have to come and pester you for my rent, eh?
- 'Why are you so different, eh? (197)

In this episode, the landlord wants to confront Azaro's father about two things: non-payment of rent and refusal to join his party, the party of the rich. In the two questions above, 'eh' replaces 'tell me'. This is the same role that the particle plays in the question that Azaro's father asks the little girl who keeps staring at him in madam Koto's bar (206)

- Why are you looking at me, eh'

In the next two examples 'eh' means 'are you'?

- Stealing ogogoro, eh?
- Hiding in the bush and drinking , 'eh' (318)

3.4.4 Suspension sign to indicate threat

Again, this usage is not new in English. It is not an invention of the post-colonial world. It is also used in the West. It is part of New Englishes because it is used very often and so falls under the category of new meaning (De Beaugrande, 1999: 03)

- 'If you move from thus room today or tomorrow you might as well stay lost, because when I finish with you…' (118)

In this episode, Ben Okri adds a sentence of explanation:

- He deliberately didn't complete his sentence for greater effect.

The silence which comes at the end of the sentence (indicated by the suspension sign) is a threat which Azaro's father stops short of saying and if completed, would have read something like this:

- You can not begin to imagine the things I will do to you if you dare disobey my orders.

3.5 LEXICAL FEATURES

Many West African writers before Ben Okri have used indigenous lexical features without deeming it necessary to explain what they mean to the uninitiated. Analyzing Felix Couchoro's diction in *Naissance du Roman Africain*, Alan Richard (1987: 126) picks out four important types of lexical features: borrowed words, transposed words (calques), onomatopoeia and neologisms. We use the same categories to study the nativized lexical features in *The Famished Road*.

3.5.1 Borrowed words

- **Abiku**

The word Abiku represents the same concept that the Igbos of West Africa refer to as *ogbanje*. It refers to children who keep 'oscillating between both worlds' to paraphrase Ben Okri (1991:8). 'Both worlds' here refer to the world of the living and the world of the dead. Azaro is an Abiku, or *spirit-child,* the translation that Ben Okri uses in the novel. The setting of the novel itself is an Abiku nation: "ours too was an Abiku nation, a spirit-child nation that keeps being reborn" (498). Although the country in which the novel is set is not mentioned, the word Abiku helps to indicate that the writer is most probably referring to Nigeria.

- **Ogogoro**

This word is used approximately 30 times in this novel (94, 156, 187, 233, 237, 318, 319…). It is a local gin that has a more intoxicating effect than palm-wine. It is also more expensive than palm-wine. Ben Okri does not see

the need to begin the word 'ogogoro' with a capital letter. To him, there is nothing strange about this word.

- **Garri**

It is used about ten times in the novel (71, 127, 144, 145, 152, 153…). Garri is flour that is obtained by grating cassava and then frying it, usually with a dash of palm oil. This gives it a yellow colour. When garri is cooked in hot water, it is called eba. It can also be poured in cold water and eaten with sugar.

- **Eba**

This is cooked garri. It is usually eaten with vegetables or with soup or stew. The word eba is used about 4 times. (41, 159, 172 and 316).

- **Egungun** (125)

An Egungun is a dancing masquerade. It is fierce and intimidating and usually appears in traditional ceremonies.

- **Dogonyaro** (121)

This is concoction of herbs taken when one has malaria. It is very bitter hence Azaro dreads the moment when he has to drink it.

- **Agbada** (122, 123, 124, 127)

An agbada is a long gown usually worn by males. The rich wear it every day and the poor wear it on Sundays and on special occasions.

- **Bukka** (146, 148)

This is a makeshift hut built with bamboo branches and leaves of raffia palm. It can also be a shop situated under the shade of a corrugated iron roof with no walls.

- **Muezzin** (219)

A muezzin is someone who calls people to prayer in the Muslim religion. This word and 'mallam' indicate that the story is based in an area where there are Muslims.

- **Mallam** (162)

A mallam is a master (a teacher of Arabic or the Qur'an) or a traditional healer.

3.5.2 Transposed Words (Calque)

According to the *New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, a calque is the transposition of a word from one language to another. The French dictionary *Le Petit Larousse* gives the example gratte-ciel which is a direct transposition (translation) of skyscraper. There are several of these words in the novel:

- **House front (used several times in this novel, e.g. 34 & 132)**

This is the area in front of any house where children usually gather to play and where the head of the home usually received his guests. It has a broader meaning than veranda or stoep in South African English. On page 131, Ben gives the plural of *housefront* as *housefronts*.

- **Barfront** (77)

This is the area in front of a bar. In some bars there a tables and chairs in this area.

- **Roomfront** (132)

This has a similar meaning to *housefront*, except that *roomfront* refers to the area in front a room in a block of flats (the flats in this case being rooms that are rented out to low income families or individuals).

- **Peppersoup** (58, 60, 62, 87, 101, 102, 106, 107, 110, 120 and in more than 15 other instances in the novel)

This is a kind of soup cooked with a lot of pepper and 'bushmeat' or with fresh fish. Most palm wine bar owners also sell peppersoup.

- **Palm Wine** (35, 40, 42, 46, 47, 57, 68 and more than 40 other instances in the novel)

Palm wine is a kind of alcoholic drink which is tapped from the raffia bush or from the palm tree. Authors like Francis Bebey and Elechi Amadi, and Mongo Beti mention this drink in their novels as well.

- **Pap** (126)

In Standard English, pap usually means nonsense, or noise or drivel or rubbish. There is also 'pap smear' in medicine. In South African English, pap is a kind of maize meal. However, in West African English, pap is a kind of breakfast meal made from corn. It is usually sweetened with sugar.

3.5.3 Onomatopoeia

- **Kokoro**

The novelist intends for this word to stand out because it begins with a capital letter. A kokoro is an ant that feeds of beans (195). The name of the insect comes from the sound it makes when it feeds.

3.5.4 Nouns

4.1 Compound nominals

There is a whole range of terms used by the novelist to refer to traders. These are usually compound nominals that are used in countries like England and Scotland; however, they are used a lot more often in non-native contexts (Bokamba, 1983: 89). Most of the compound nominals that Ben Okri uses already exist as nouns in West African English and are used daily in countries like Cameroon, Nigeria and Ghana. They can be found on signboards in the business areas. This word formation strategy that consists in "using two words which are commonly used in English and combining them to form a new expression" is also known as *compounding* (Platt et al, 1985: 97).

4.2 Compound nominals from T*he Famished Road*

These words are usually made up of two nouns as in 'compound women', or a description as in 'bad-luck boy' and 'the international photographer'.

- **Compound people** (160)

These are people who live in the same compound

- **Compound women** (51)

These are women who live in the same compound.

- **Hausa perfume** (365)

This is cheap local perfume prepared by people of the Hausa tribe.

- **Kola-nuts** (198 and 323)

A kola-nut is the fruit of the kola tree. It is rich in caffeine and is usually broken in traditional ceremonies or during visits.

- **Jollof rice** (41)

It is rice cooked with vegetables or palm oil and all other ingredients (tomatoes, onions, green beans etc.) at the same time.

- **Fried plantains** (41)

This is plantain deep-fried in vegetable or palm oil. Usually the plantains are ripe, in which case they can also be called 'dodo'.

- **Bushmeat** (44 and 65)

This is the meat from wild animals, caught in the forest (bush is a synonym for forest). Bokamba mentions bush-meat in *The Africanisation of English* (1983: 89).

- **The international photographer** (230)

In West Africa, 'international' is sometimes attached to a word to indicate 'expert' or 'first class'. It does not mean that it has anything to do with the outer borders of the country. In *The Famished Road*, the photographer gives himself the title 'international' because he has caught some corrupt politicians on film, thus making him a first-rate photographer.

- **A chief's cap** (239)

The chief's cap is usually red or white in colour. It indicates that someone has taken the chieftaincy title. The person, henceforth called a 'chief' (240) becomes an elder of the community.

- **Bad-luck boy** (P434)

The first two words are usually pronounced together: /baelok/. A 'bad-luck' person is someone who is full of trouble. Madame Koto calls Azaro a 'bad-luck' boy because he has caused all her customers to leave her bar, thereby ruining her business for the evening.

3.6 Proverbs

- **A river does not travel a new path for nothing** (444)

This proverb means that when an important person comes to visit you, there is usually a reason for it. There is another version to this proverb which says that "a toad does not run in the daytime for nothing; there must be something after its life".

3.7 Idiomatic expressions

The online *Hyperdictionary* defines an idiomatic expression as "an expression whose meanings cannot be inferred from the meanings of the words that make it"**.** The utterance takes a new meaning in the context in which it is used, and in the case of *The Famished Road*, reflects the influence of the indigenous way of thinking on the language:

- **They are hiding behind their wives' wrappers** (97).

This means to duck for cover in the face of trouble. Azoro's father accuses his creditors of being scared to face him. In this episode, the men hide in the safety of their homes. Only the women go around, trying to find out what is

happening. The idiomatic expression makes use of the loincloth or 'wrapper'[7] as it is called in this episode.

3.8 Discourse features

According to Brown and Yule, (1983:1) language has two main functions; "transactional" function which deals with the expression of "content" and the "interactional" which deals with the expression of social relations and personal attitudes. This section looks at the interactional function given that this research report focuses mainly on languages use.

3.8.1 A few discourse structures

- **Is your husband not in?** (197)

In this episode, the landlord is trying to find out whether Azoro's father is at home. It is customary to ask whether someone is "in" when we want to know whether someone in particular is at home or whether we go looking for him/her.

- **We showed them pepper, didn't we?** (304)

To show somebody pepper is to teach someone a lesson. Azaro's father is happy that he has beaten up some thugs, so he asks his son this question.

- **Go and join the army instead of disturbing people** (351)

[7] The wrapper is the most important clothing item in West and Cental Africa. It is a piece of cloth, usually Holland wax or some other cheap local quality. It can be worn around the waist like a sarong. It can also be used to carry a baby on the back.

Soldiers are usually considered to be the strongest people in the community. So when someone is considered to be a bully, people would ask him to take his energy to the Army where it can be put to good use.

3.9 Insults.

In the novel, insults are used a lot, especially against the young Azaro. People vent their anger by using insults. In some cases, people are called animals names. Azaro is called a rat (147) by an angry customer. Another angry customer (209) calls him a 'small goat'. The Landlord calls Azaro's father Black Cricket (100). This is an obvious mockery of the nickname Black Tyger.

Azaro's father calls one of his neighbours a "thief" (99). This does not mean that the man is a thief. He just wants to show the man that he is not happy with him. Azaro's eyes are called "bad-luck eyes" (464) when he stares at someone's stomach. He is also called a "bad-luck boy" (434), a "stubborn spirit child" (321), and an "ugly boy" (240).

3.10 The "eh" particle.

Although we touched on this aspect under phonological features, I believe it is important to touch on it here since it is a generalized speech habit. "Eh" is used many times in the novel. On page 321 alone, it is used six times:

- You think you are powerful, eh?
- Why did you break their window, eh?
- Don't you see how poor we are. Eh?

- Do you know how much glass costs, eh?
- You use the spirits as an excuse every time you do something bad, eh?
- So you went and broke the windows because the spirits stoned you, eh?

Eh is not listed as a word in *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* which has more that 100.000 entries and 83.000 quotations. As indicated in section 3.4.2, it is used for rhetorical questions and to replace questions like aren't you, isn't it, aren't they etc.

3.11 Pronunciation

- **sheeze** (45)

This is the shout of 'cheese' that usually goes off before a photo is taken.

- **what kind of question is dat (320)**

In this case, the bad spelling in the novel is used to show bad pronunciation (Platt et al, 1984: 58-59). In an obvious interference of the local language on English, a dental fricative is switched for a dental plosive.

3.12 Syntactic structure.

In the next few examples, there is no obvious separation between the first part of the sentence and the second part. Or, in the second case, the sentence presents contradictory use of words.

- **I slept and woke up** (83).

In pidgin, you would say 'I sleep wuk'op', so it is just a translation of that structure.

- **I fell asleep standing up** (83)

Here, it would be more appropriate to say: *I slept on my feet*.

- **How can you be hungry with that small stomach** (83)

A more 'acceptable' structure would have read: *How can you possibly be hungry; your stomach is so small!*

3.13 Semantic and grammatical shifts.

In New Englishes, there is a lot of language shift. This means that the usage of structures which exist in a language changes. Meaning changes occur in one of the following ways (Platt et al, 1984: 101):

- There is a complete change in the meaning of a word.
- The meaning of a word may be restricted so that only part of its meaning is implied when it is used
- The word may add a new meaning.

One example of language shift in *The Famished Road* is the personalisation of 'Trouble'. It is a thing you can 'give someone' or which can move from one place to another:

- I don't know but your compound people gave them trouble (p. 160)
- Anyone who looks for my trouble will get enough trouble for life (199)
- Trouble has arrived (p. 392)
- I am tired of your trouble (351)

The examples above indicate that trouble is a tangible thing. And interestingly, in all four cases I have quoted, 'trouble' means 'problems'. It has nothing to do with a

structure like ‘I am in trouble’. In West Africa, if you ‘mess with somebody’, you are ‘looking for his trouble’.

We can also notice this kind of usage in structures like:

- We will bring business to you (p. 221)
- That ugly boy will destroy your business for you (224)

In the first example, the speaker means that he will help increase the business activity in Madame Koto’s bar. In the second, example, ‘for you’ actually means that Azaro will take Madame Koto’s business away from her.

In West Africa, when a woman is pregnant, it is usually believed that she is carrying the baby for someone. Technically, the baby is not hers. That is why they say that she is pregnant ‘for someone’. Consider the following two examples:

- A: I hear that she is pregnant
- B: for who?

The grammatically correct form here would be ‘for whom?’ The question ‘for who?’ means:

- Whose baby is she carrying?

This is the question Azaro’s Dad asks him when Azaro tells him that Madame Koto is pregnant:

- Is she pregnant for you? (306)

In other words, Azaro’s father is asking the boy: *Is she carrying your child?*

The text analysis in this chapter reveals that the language use in *The Famished Road* is very different from traditional use. It is not the kind of language one would expect to hear if one tunes in to the BBC for example. It is not what you would expect to read if you picked up a copy of *The Daily Telegraph*. Such words and sentences add a distinct West African flavour to the novel. Such features are becoming more and more prominent in African literature and form an integral part of the style of the novel. These aspects therefore need to be given due weight when it comes to their translation.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 The importance of translation and translators in the emergence of West African literature

Literary translation is different from other types of translation. The translator has the duty of making the target language reader understand what the source language reader understood. He has a duty to make the target language reader feel the same emotions that the source language reader felt. He also has the duty to make the target language reader laugh where the source language reader laughed, and cry where the source language reader cried. So, for such a translator, the definition of translation is more than simply translating language A into language B. The translator has a very important task, which is most probably as important as the task of the writer in the eyes of the source language reader

> Traduire, c'est énoncer dans une autre langue (ou langue cible) ce qui a été énoncé dans une autre langue source en conservant les équivalences sémantiques et stylistiques.
>
> (Dubois, in Bell, 1991: 05)

Dubois' reference to the need to preserve the semantic and stylistic equivalences is an important element in his definition and makes it relevant to the translator of literary texts. Literary translation, to be more specific, 'is a transfer of distinctive features of a literary work into a language other than that of the work's composition' (Robinson, 1997b:13). Some definitions like the following one (Bell, 1991: 06) are too general

and do not tell the untrained person what exactly goes or should go into the translation of a literary text:

> Translation is the replacement of a text in one language by a representation of an equivalent text in a second language.

The literary translator recognizes the importance of all the dimensions of a translation, especially stylistic ones. Novels, poems, plays, short stories and other kinds of literary texts usually have several layers of meaning and translating them calls up most, if not all the skills that a translator is required to have: target language (TL) knowledge; text-type knowledge; source language (SL) knowledge; subject area ('real world') knowledge; and contrastive knowledge (Bell, 1991: 36).

The literary translator has played a major role in spreading and enriching literatures all over the world over the centuries. It has also helped some literatures to survive (Gaddis Rose, 1997: 9). Greek literature had a major influence on Latin literature; during the Renaissance, many writers were multilingual and this gave their works a great deal of variety; in France and England, translation gained importance with its contribution to the development of classical aesthetics (Woodsworth, 1994: 59). In West Africa, translation has made the works of writers like Chinua Achebe, Nkem Nwankwo, Soyinka and Tutuola accessible to francophone readers and Camara Laye, Mongo Beti, Calixte Beyala and Ferdinand Oyono to anglophone readers. These writers as well as many others have helped to develop and reveal a new literature to the world. In the process, they have also enriched literary creation on both sides of the francophone/anglophone wall. In less than a hundred years, African and West African literature has contributed several important works of fiction to the greater world pantheon of literature. African literature is now studied in all regions of the world.

It is important to note that there are a number of factors that come into play when we talk about the emergence of literatures: dominant cultures versus minor ones, and the periphery versus the centre (Woodsworth: 1994: 58). This translates into the tug of war that goes on between the former colonial master's culture and language and the former colonial native's culture and language. In *Translators and the Emergence of National Literatures* (1994: 59), Woodsworth distinguishes between three types of emergence:

- Development of national literatures at the same time as, and parallel to, the constitution of a political entity. An example of this is the strengthening of Roman literature with translations from the Greek language and civilisation.
- Re-emergence or re-direction of national literatures, such as changing in literary trends in Europe in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.
- Emergence of new literatures, and in particular, postcolonial literatures.

The last point is of particular importance to us because it touches on what has been happening in West Africa in the last few decades. The emergence of West African literature has been supported by translation and interpretation. Often, the reader of the postcolonial text is expected to be a plurilingual being as the works of this new generation of writers usually contain traces of the native tongue, and what the reader actually discovers is a language "in between" (Woodsworth, 1994: 60). The translator has to take many important, and often major, decisions. He has important licence and the success of the literary piece in the target language is dependent not only on the author, but also – and to a large extent – on the translator.

4.1.2. Translation in West African and African literature: the present state of affairs

In the major translation markets of the West, that is, in Britain and in the United States of America, there is a major imbalance between translated books and published ones. Out of every seven thousand books that are published, only slightly over a thousand are translated into other languages. English is the language into which most books are translated, followed by French (Venuti, 1992: 12).

The imbalance in publishing and translation is reflected in the poorer, less active African market. In fact, the situation is a lot worse in Africa, and more particularly in the field of literature. Most of the books that were translated in the sixties and seventies still constitute the bulk of translated material. To the list of writers like Mongo Beti, Camara Laye, Ferdinand Oyono and Yambo Uologuem, only a few names like Mariama Bâ and Calixte Beyala have been added. Since the West turned its gaze away from Africa in search of more exotic literatures (Snyder, 1985: 78/79), interest in the translation of African novels has waned. Most publishing houses on the African continent work only in one language. This is the case of publishing houses like the *Nouvelles Éditions Africaines* in Dakar, Senegal, *Éditions CLE* and *Éditions Ndze* in Cameroon, *Ibadan University Press*, *Spectrum* and *Fourth Dimension Publishers* in Nigeria. These publishing houses have a policy of publishing mainly books that are in the General Certificate of Education (Ordinary and Advanced level) examination syllabus, the BAC and the CAP examinations syllabus and the West African Education Certificate examination certificate. This gives them a more lucrative window of activities as their books are sold to education departments.

The publishing houses that have adopted a more broad-based approach and "remained faithful" (Snyder, 1985: 78) to translation and African literature are situated in the West. The Three Continents Press is based in Washington, D.C. Heinemann Educational books, which publishes the African and Caribbean Writers' Series has branches in several African countries in Africa. However, its headquarters are in London. The *Macmillan* publishing house, which publishes the *Pacesetters* series, is also based in the United Kingdom. Although these publishing houses have translated some books into English (like Mariama Bâ's *Une si longue lettre* (1980) which has been published under the English name *So long a letter* (1980) and Calixte Beyala's *C'est le soleil qui m'a brûlé* (1996) which has been translated as *The Sun Hath Looked Upon Me* (1996), they do not have a database of books that were translated from other languages.

It is extremely difficult to obtain data on translations. The only published data I found (Jahn, 1968: 287) and which I have attached as Appendix B, is thirty-seven years old. I wrote to *Heinemann*, *Macmillan* and *Nouvelles Editions Africaines*, asking for data on the literary texts they have translated. Only Heinemann sent me a quick reply (Appendix B[8]), saying that they do not keep any. Searches on the Internet all led to a dead end. Searches using UNESCO's *Index Translationum*, a record of thousands of translated texts from all over the world, came up with nothing, even when I used authors like Chinua Achebe, Mongo Beti and Ferdiand Oyono, whose books have been translated into many languages (Appendix C).

[8] I wrote to Heinemann asking whether they had translated any books from English to French or from French to English. The person who read the mail obviously did not think that it was important, although I had indicated that I was conducting research. The answer I got was that they had not translated any texts into French. Nothing was said about texts that had been translated from French into English.

There are two documents of interest: a list of African literary texts, retrieved from *Heinemann's* website (Appendix D), and a list of Africa's best one hundred books, retrieved from the website of the *Zimbabwe International Book Forum* (Appendix E). Here is a summary of the translated texts from the Heinemann website:

Author	***French title***	***English title***	**Translator**
Cheik Hamidou Kane	*L'Aventure Ambiguë*	*Ambiguous Adventure*	Not indicated
Sembène Ousmane	*Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu*	*God's Bits of Wood*	Not indicated
Ferdinand Oyono	*Une Vie de Boy*	*Houseboy*	Not Indicated
Mariama Bâ	*Une Si Longue Lettre*	*So Long A Letter*	Not Indicated
Sony Laboi Tansi	*Les Sept Solitudes De Lorsa Lopez*	*The Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez*	Not indicated
Calixte Beyala	*C'est le Soleil qui m'a Brûlé*	*The Sun Hath Looked Upon Me.*	Not indicated
Calixte Beyala	*Ton Nom Sera Tanga*	*Your Name Shall Be Tanga*	Not indicated

This list (Appendix E) is not exhaustive. It does not include all the writers whose works have been translated. It leaves out authors like Jacques Rabemananjara (1989), Flavien Ranaivo (1989) and even Leopold Sédar Senghor (2004). I believe that the major reason for this is that most of the writers I have just named are poets who made their names in the days of the Negritude movement. Negritude has since lost its significance and *Heinemann* probably sees no reason to reprint these books.

Below is a summary of the books on the *Zimbabwe International Book Forum* website (as the name indicates, only those books that are considered the best made the list. So it is far from exhaustive):

Author	***French Title***	***English Title***	**Translator**	**Publisher**
Bâ Mariama	*Une Si Longue Lettre*	*So Long a Letter*	Not Indicated	Nouvelles Éditions Africaines
Tadjo Veronique	*Mamy Wata et Le Monstre*	*Mamy Wata and the Monster*	Not Indicated	Nouvelles Éditions Africaines
Bâ, Amadou Hampâté	*L´Étrange Destin de Wangrin*	*The Fortunes of Wangrin*	Not Indicated	Union Générale d´Éditions
Mongo Beti	*Le Pauvre Christe de Bomba*	*The Poor Christ of Bomba*	Not Indicated	Robert Laffont
Birago Diop	*Les Nouveaux Contes d´Amadou Koumba*	*Tales of Amadou Koumba*	Not Indicated	Présence Africaine
Cheik Hamidou Kane	*L'Aventure Ambiguë*	*Ambiguous Adventure*	Not indicated	Julliard
Ahmadou Kourouma	Les Soleils des Indépendances	The Suns of Independence	Not Indicated	Les Presses de l´Université de Montréal
Niane, Djibril Tamsir	Soundjata, ou l´Épopée Mandingue	Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali	Not Indicated	Présence Africaine
Sembene, Ousmane	Les bouts de bois de Dieu	God's Bits of Wood	Not Indicated	Le Livre Contemporain
Sow Fall, Aminata	La Grève des Bàttu	The Beggars' Strike	Not Indicated	Présence Africaine

The present status quo, with very few translations, does not show signs of changing, if we look at the two summaries above. The major explanation is that most translations in the sixties and seventies were commissioned by American publishers (Snyder, 1984: 77-78). This was the time of the Black power movement. Interest in that

movement has since died down. Black Americans have more civil rights nowadays and interest in movements like the Black Panthers has waned. American publishers have shifted their critical attention to the Middle East and Asia. There is little interest in the translation of African fiction both on and outside the continent. It is for this reason that Emile Snyder started calling for more translations and translators of African works of fiction as early as 1984 (1984: 77). Few people have heeded that call to this day. In the sixties and seventies, only the very successful francophone writers were translated into English. In the new millennium, publishers have bucked that trend and only a few new writers have been translated although there is still a lot of writing going on.

4.2 Translation and postcolonialism

Western researchers and translators have been reflecting on translation strategies and on translation theory for almost two thousand years. Douglas Robinson's *Western Translation Theory* (1997B: 31) contains a text by Saint Augustine who was in fact an Algerian. However, all his works are on the Bible and on Western literature. There is very little publication on African translation theory by Africans.

It is always the 'other' who commissions the translation of an African text and who reflects on the translation of African literature. There is very little activity going on in the African continent in terms of the translation of literary texts. When translation is left in the hands of the 'other', two things happen: first there is a tendency to perpetuate what the West knows or thinks of the culture it is interested in; and secondly, only what the West is interested in is translated. In the case of North Africa for example, it is the Orientalist paradigm of carpet-flying magicians, the world of

The Arabian Nights and Muslim fundamentalists (Jacquemond, 1994: 140-160). Such paradigms are also influenced by economic factors. Since most African countries are poor, they cannot produce many books. So they are forced to consume western books. And they are forced to consume the kind of books that the west is interested in producing.

The postcolonial world is still structured along bipolar lines. The end of colonialism did not erode all the walls that existed between coloniser and colonised. The former colonial master still has some amount of control over the empire he created (Robinson, 1997a: 8). He is the creator of the context in which the former colonised being finds himself. He is the creator of the traditions that the coloniser now copies and perpetuates (Jacquemond, 1994: 140). In the case of this research, it is the novel form and Ben Okri is the perpetuator. The relationship of dominator versus dominated is ever present:

> …they involve the complex interactions and transactions of invasion and resistance, occupation and accommodation, propaganda and education, domination and submission, and so on.
>
> (Robinson, 1997A: 8)

Although globalisation has reduced the boundaries that exist between nations and cultures, it has not completely eroded the things that divide communities in different countries and continents. The English that is spoken in West Africa for example, is regarded as bad by Some Africans and Westerners. Western ideals continue to be regarded as the acceptable norms while values from former colonies are considered 'exotic' or 'strange'. Here are a few yardsticks that can be found at both ends of the spectrum (most of these examples are taken from Robinson, 1997a: 107):

Self	**Other**
Civilised	Savage
Enclosed	Scattered
Domestic	Foreign
Normal	Deviant
Proper	Metaphorical
Written	Oral
Capitalist	Kin-ordered
Complicitous negations of 'self'	Complicitous affirmations of 'other'
Center	Periphery
Order	Anarchy
Good	Bad

New literatures and new works like *The Famished Road* are a breath of fresh air but also a challenging type of reading. New literatures are the literatures created in newly-created cosmopolitan societies that spring up during the process of decolonisation. As these communities increase, texts written by bilingual, postcolonial writers challenge paradigms and redefine accepted notions of the metropole in the center and the ex-colony at the periphery. The translator is suddenly confronted with texts that are referred to as 'hybrid' or 'metissés' (Mehrez, 1994: 121). They are different from the kind of texts that used to exist in world literature before they appeared. This is because the languages fall in-between what the native or the former-coloniser are used to. Western philosophies do not adequately answer the questions of the new West African who is surrounded by a reality that is still to be defined.

In this context, the work of the translator becomes very difficult. The difficulty of translation of postcolonial literature is due to the fact that no solutions or strategies to the translations of such works have been suggested. Robinson (1997c: 143) actually expresses his disappointment at the fact that Niranjana does not offer any solutions in *Siting Translation* (1992). In some of the *Heinemann* texts examined, the translated

texts were not even prefaced by the translator (Mariama Ba's *So long a letter* (1980), Mongo Beti's *Houseboy* (1966) and *The Old Man and the Medal*, Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo's *Translations from the Night* (1975) and David Diop's *Hammer Blows* (1973). The longest piece of writing by a translator was Simon Mpondo and Frank Jones' acknowledgements in David Diop's *Hammer Blows* (1973: IX). And they were doing just that: acknowledging the help that they got in the process of their work. They did not discuss the strategies that they employed, although they mentioned that they discussed these in Frank Jones' translation seminar (1973: IX).

Contemporary African researchers in translation studies have not written books on how African literary texts should be translated. Texts on postcolonialism generally come from the West or from Asia: Eric Cheyfitz (1997), Robinson (1997a), Niranjana (2000) and Gupta (2004). In a situation where translators use strategies provided by people from 'other' cultures, even well intentioned translators can make wrong choices without meaning to because the dominant culture and the dominated one are diametrically opposed. In the absence of reflection and research on translation procedures of post-colonial literature, translators work as best they can:

> (1) In translation from a hegemonic language-culture into a dominated one, the translator appears as the servile mediator through whom foreign-made linguistic-cultural objects are integrated without question into his own dominated language-culture, thus aggravating its schizophrenia.
> (2) In translation from a dominated language-culture into a hegemonic one, the translator appears as the authoritative mediator through whom the dominated language-culture is maintained outside the limits of self and at the same time adapted to this self in order for it to be able to consume the dominated linguistic-cultural object.
>
> (Jacquemond, 1994: 155)

There exists another situation, one that is very radical. In this kind of transfer, the translator tries to rewrite history (Niranjana, 1992: 173 and Mehrez, 1994: 122). He

takes on the responsibility to correct all the wrongs and injustices of colonialism and subjugation. However, this is a bad option because:

> The attitude of the native intellectual sometimes takes on the aspect of a cult or of a religion, and the tendency is to forget that the creation of culture in colonised space often involves techniques and languages "borrowed" from the coloniser.
>
> (Niranjana, 1992: 166)

There is a need to find the right balance. We have to privilege neither the position of the Western intellectual nor that of the post-colonial intellectual. Too often, translation studies has preoccupied itself with pure meaning instead of realising that the voice of the 'other' is always filtered through the translator's consciousness (Niranjana, quoted in Wolf, 2001: 183). After 'the cultural turn'[9] in translation studies, fresher points of view have to be sought because the translator is an important cultural mediator in the cultural pluricentre.

In the present day bipolar world of former coloniser and former colonised, some writers believe that they have the right to defend their cultures from invaders. There are also translators who fall into this category. The space 'between' is the area where the colonised native deliberately mistranslates the colonial script, 'alienating and undermining its authority' (Dingwaney in Wolf, 2001: 187). The in-between space is of particular importance in the context of postcolonialism. This third space should be the point of departure for postcolonial translation strategies (Bhaba in Wolf, 2001: 188). In this third space, polarity can be avoided and the mediators can undertake a process of negotiation, because:

> The Third Space, the locus where this negotiation takes place, should

[9] The 'cultural turn' is a movement in translation studies which happened around the early eighties. It was started by translators like Susan Bassnett and André Lefevre. Culture was recognised as an integral part of translation because each society has its own habits and beliefs and language is an integral part of culture (Wolf, 2001: 183).

> not be thought of as a space where we can witness the harmonious encounter of cultures to be translated or the limitless productivity and abundance of inventive inspirations.
>
> (2001: 188)

In the search for the most appropriate strategy, it is important to get the right balance as well as avoid theories that are 'too heavy in technical terminology' (Nida, 2001: 1). This will ensure that the strategies are well understood. If they are understood, they can be put to use immediately, even by people who have not received formal translator training.

4.3 Domestication versus foreignisation

Foreign texts and translations share something in common: they contain meaning that the translator or the foreign reader cannot fully grasp or understand (Venuti, 1995: 17/18). The foreign culture can conflict with one's own belief systems and what one is used to. It is difficult to achieve a one-to-one relationship between the receiving culture and the foreign culture. The translator constantly has to deal with problems like translating a story about Australian kangaroos for a Cameroonian child who has never seen kangaroos. Another example of conflict would be a book about boy scouts or about an initiation school in the mountains. The translator constantly has to battle with translating elements that may not be familiar to a person in another context. This sets up a constant conflict between "freedom" and "servitude". "Freedom" stands for the "translator's license" or the right to change things for the good of the target text and the target language reader (Venuti, 1995: 18). "Servitude" stands for the choice to remain faithful to the source text and retain most of the initial ideas, arrangement and vocabulary as the source language author set them down. What this means, in essence, is that the activity of translation is one of violence:

> This relationship points to the violence that resides in the very purpose and activity of translation: the reconstitution of the foreign text in accordance with values, beliefs and representations that preexist it in the target language, always configured in hierarchies of dominance and marginality, always determining the production, circulation and reception of texts.
>
> (Venuti, 1995: 18)

The translator has to be a mediator and ensure that the end result of his activity is a quality product that is acceptable to the readership and does not conflict with the 'other's' values. Translation plays a major role in creating national identities and it "potentially figures in ethnic discrimination, geopolitical confrontations, colonialism, terrorism, war" (Venuti, 1995: 19). We can also look at this process in terms of *domestication* and *foreignisation*, that is, choosing to follow Schleiermacher's famous dictum of leaving the source culture and moving towards the target culture or leaving the target culture and moving towards the source culture (in Venuti, 1995: 19).

Domestication represents a unified world (Venuti, 1995: 20), which favours the interests of the major imperialists like the United States of America. It stands for a world in which everyone thinks alike. The 'other's' culture is pruned to look beautiful in one's eyes. All the savage or hostile characteristics are chopped off. In the world of domesticated translation, people have the same kinds of food, hobbies, feelings and social and political beliefs. It is the kind of translation in which the translator decides to impose the vision of the western world because, according to him, it is better to have a unified world than one in which there are too many voices. The will to domesticate is championed by those who want to see humankind come together as a single unit.

Adapting such an approach would entail translating *The Famished Road* in a way that ensures that all the indigenous terms are translated. Features of New Englishes would also be changed to more acceptable *BBC English* or *le bon français,* as the case may be. The translator becomes a kind of missionary and goes all out to save the riotous text, just like the early missionaries who were sent out to colonies and who had the responsibility of showing the natives how bad their religious and cultural beliefs were, and then showing them a better alternative: Christianity. Christianity was supposed to be the vehicle that would take everyone to heaven.

Venuti quotes Nida's principle of *dynamic equivalence* as a theory designed to domesticate translation:

> That which unites mankind is much greater than that which divides, and hence there is, even in cases of very disparate languages and cultures, a basis for communication.
>
> (Nida, 1964: 2 in Venuti, 1995: 22)

However, I believe that the problem is not really the theory of *dynamic equivalence* but one of interpretation. Nida is one of those who have championed the importance of culture (see Nida, 2000: chapter 2) and context (2000: chapter 3) in translations. I believe that the words here refer more to the fact that everything is translatable, even literature. So for translatability to happen, the translator has to adopt a dynamic approach. We develop a *dynamic approach* in translation in section 4.5.

The other approach that may be adopted in translation, one that was favoured by Schleiermacher (Venuti, 1995: 20), is known as foreignisation. It is a situation in which the 'other's' voice is made to prevail. Translation becomes an avenue to

promote multiplicity and avoid monotony. When we choose to foreignise a text, we choose to make a sacrifice. We choose to reduce the importance we attach to our own culture, and place it instead on someone else's culture. We look at the 'other's' culture based on a set of beliefs that are known to be harboured in that culture.

> The "foreign' in foreignising translation is not a transparent representation of an essence that resides in the foreign text and is valuable in itself, but a strategic construction whose value is contingent on the current target-language situation.
>
> (1995: 20)

The translator reconstructs his working document based on the community for which he is working, even if this means going off the beaten track. Translation based on foreignisation can help to avoid Anglo-American domination of all activities that go on in the world today. It can be used to fight ethnocentricism and racism, cultural narcissism and imperialism (Venuti, 1995: 20) and ensure that all voices are heard in global affairs. Unity can also exist in diversity.

"Conflict resolution" or the mediation of such bi-polar tensions is of utmost importance and demand a high level of skill and mental alertness. The translator should be able to make a choice between one culture and the other and thereafter remain consistent in relation to the choice he has made. In literary translation, a bad translation[10] can cost the publishing house a lot of money. The process of translation therefore entails making several major decisions:

> Translation is the forcible replacement of the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text with text that is intelligible to the target-language reader.
>
> (Venuti, 1995: 18)

[10] Bad translation here does not mean using a wrong word, like translating 'soulier' in French to 'sole' in English. It can also be the choices the translator makes. For instance, the translator decides to translate a book into Hindi and gives gory details about someone's experiences in a bull-fighting ring, forgetting that Hinduism forbids all kinds of torture to animals.

The target community has to be included in the process of translation; otherwise the translated text will be rejected. It will be viewed as an imposed text. The target community has to look at the text and see something that fits in well into his own linguistic community. Major decisions have to be taken in order to produce the kind of text that the 'other' would accept. I believe that the best way to do this is to foreignise the text by using the theory of *dynamic equivalence* and more especially, the functional approach in translation, also known as the *skopostheorie*.

4.4 Suggested approach to translation

In the context of postcolonial literature, the translator is also seen as a cultural mediator (Katan, 1999: 12) whose job is a lot more important than simple language transfer. He has to deal with the writer of the source text as well as with the pulls that the source language culture and the target language culture exert on him. His success depends on whether he can produce a text that is 'culturally appropriate' (Nida, 2001: 3). In 4.3 I suggest some translation strategies. Two concepts are very important in the strategies that I suggest here: equivalence and skopostheorie.

4.4.1 Equivalence.

Equivalence refers to the theory of equivalence as propounded by Eugene Nida. He formulated two theories of equivalence known as *formal equivalence* and *dynamic equivalence*. Formal equivalence focuses on:

> the message itself, in both form and content. In such a translation, one is concerned with such correspondences as poetry to poetry, sentence to sentence, and concept to concept.

(1990: 27)

This kind of translation helps the reader to understand as much of the source text as possible although it is very difficult to achieve. In some situations, it is even impossible to translate form for form. In contrast, we have what is known as 'dynamic equivalence':

> Dynamic equivalence is (…) to be defined in terms of the degree to which the receptors of the message in the receptor language respond to it in substantially the same manner as the receptors in the source language. This response can never be identical, for the culture and historical settings can never be identical, for the culture and historical settings are too different, but there should be a high degree of equivalence of response, or the translation will have failed to accomplish its purpose.
>
> (Nida and Taber, 1969: 24)

Dynamic equivalence works on the principle of *equivalent effect*. The translator looks for the term that will have the nearest effect on the target text reader as that which was felt by the source text reader, i.e. "that the relationship between receiver and message should aim at being the same as between the original receivers and the Source Language message". Take for example a text on Eskimos and the Bible: it is appropriate to say *White as snow*. That comparison can easily be understood in Europe for example. However, most Africans who do not know the concept of snow will battle to understand what it stands for. They will identify more with a comparison like 'white as cotton' or 'white as corn flour'.

4.4.2 Skopostheorie

Skopostheorie is closely related to the theory of *function* and the *functional approach* in translation. Translation, according to Nord is an activity in which it is always important to ask what the purpose of the activity is (1997: 28-29). Skopostheorie is

very similar to *Handlungstheorie* which is mainly interested in actions. This concept did not start in the twentieth century. It started with the works of people like Cicero, St Jerome and Martin Luther. Nord even comments that notions like formal and dynamic equivalence, as suggested by Nida and Taber (1964) are included in the functional approach.

Skopostheorie is based on words like *aim*, *purpose*, *intention* and *function*. The theory is based on the skopos rule which says that a translation is determined by its skopos or that the end justifies the means. Every text is created for a particular reason and the translator should be able to pick it out and "justify (begründen) their choice of a particular skopos in a given translational situation" (1997: 29). The Skopos of a translation has to be decided by the client. However, the client does not tell the translator how to go about his work, as Nord says (1997:30):

> Note that the translation brief does not tell the translator how to go about their translating job, what translation strategy to use, or what translation type to choose. These decisions depend entirely on the translator's responsibility and competence.

If the translator wants to produce an appropriate translation, if he wants to produce a translation that is not biased or patronising, if he wants to avoid pulling the novel out of its natural habitat, he must take certain measures that have, as yet, not been enunciated in a single theoretical text. If he wants to produce a translation that is 'in-context' just like the source text itself (*The Famished Road*) it is necessary that he respect the following criteria: be plurilingual, know the source text and the target text cultures, know the history of the source text culture, know West African pidgins and creoles, know translation theory, be aware of New Englishes and avoid footnotes.

4.4.2.1 He must be a plurilingual person. Our analysis of New Englishes revealed that the novel contains items from the English language as well as from African

languages. In the case of the translator of *The Famished Road*, knowledge of English and French are not enough. The translator should be able to understand the many lexical, grammatical and phonological features that exist side by side with the English language and which are usually not explained or annotated. This expectation is only natural, considering that Africa is perhaps the most multilingual continent in the world (Bokamba, 1982: 77)

4.4.2.2 He should 'know' the source language and the target language cultures. This does not mean that he should have a vast knowledge of his source text culture which he has gleaned from history, anthropology or literature texts. He should have first hand information of source language and target language cultural realities so that he can easily replace one with the other, rather than inventing something that already exists. The notion of Abiku for example is not a common phenomenon in the West. However, it is easy for a francophone West African to understand because he also has such realities in his own culture. The *Famla* culture of the western region of Cameroon and the *Ngondo* culture of the littoral area are both based on people who come back to live in the world of the living. Such forms are different from ghouls and ghosts. Similarly, the nearest thing to a dancing *Egwugwu* in the West is the parade with costumes and paper masks. However, the *Egwugwu* or *juju* is more than a costume dance. It incorporates mystic and occult beliefs and is usually carved out of the religious and ontological culture of the society.

4.4.2.3 He must be aware of the history of the culture from which he wants to translate and the culture into which he wants to translate. This will not only avoid hurting some people's sensitivities, but it will also help him to avoid making wrong

calls. Ben Okri talks about his nation being an Abiku nation (494). This is tied to the idea of the newly independent country which is going through a metamorphosis.

Awareness of history will also help him refrain from soaking up the 'other's culture. At the same time, it will help him avoid the temptation of playing the role of a 'correctional translator or historian' who goes out to rewrite the history book and correct the wrongs of the past.

4.4.2.4 A fair knowledge of the Pidgins and Creoles that are spoken in West Africa is an added advantage. In the Côte d'Ivoire, there is a variety of french called *Noushi*[11]. This language is very similar to the *Camfranglais* that is spoken in Cameroon. Most countries also have a local version of *Verlan* (*Verlan* comes from the French word *l'envers* which means 'reverse'[12]). These languages are mutually interchangeable because they have the same syntactic and semantic structures. They can also help one in the understanding of statements like 'looking for someone's trouble' (199). This is easy to understand if you know the concept of 'find palaver' that is directly translated from indigenous languages.

4.4.2.5 He should be aware of translation theory. There are a lot of translators who have never studied translation theory but who can produce good translations by relying only on gut feeling. I believe that to put in place a systematic approach to translation, there is a need for a new breed of conscious translators who will adopt a new post-colonial approach to translation. Awareness of equivalence and function as

[11] Noushi is a dialect of French which has many new verbs. Words are heavily influenced by the indigenous languages. There is a website in Noushi vocabulary, www.noushi.com. I have printed some pages from that website and attached them to this research report under APPENDIX F.
[12] Verlan is very popular among young people. The older generations do not understand it although most of the words are just ordinary words spoken in reverse plus some English words. In *verlan* for example, 'femme' is reversed to give 'meffe' (pronounced /meuf/).

well as the importance of the 'cultural turn' in translation studies can only add something to a translator's work; it cannot subtract from it.

4.4.2.6 He should be aware of the New Englishes and attitudes towards them in their present day post-colonial setting. Some people still look on features of New Englishes in some parts of the world as 'mistakes' (Bamgbose, 1983: 99) rather than as a new type of language. At the same time, those who opt for puritan BBC Received Pronunciation and its accompanying grammar are looked on as affected or snobbish (Bamgbose, 1971: 41). The translator of new, West African literature should be someone who is able to see New Englishes as different (Kachru, 1986: 98).

At the same time, he should be someone who knows that French in Africa is not necessarily French from France. It has incorporated new, Africanised concepts in its new habitat.

4.4.2.7 He should avoid footnotes in which he explains features of New Englishes. He should consider them as an important aspect of his work, and give their French equivalents. New Englishes and deviations from *le bon français* are not about to disappear. And it is usually easy to notice that someone is a second-language speaker (Bamgbose, 1983: 102) because they are unable to make all the phonological distinctions that first language speakers can operate. So I believe it is important to embrace this difference and start using it as a feature of translation. It is better to use a language that already exists rather than creating a new one that exists in books only.

4.5 Some examples of translations

The aim of this section is not to give a French equivalent for every term that we defined in chapter three. I give some French equivalents of a number of words that will serve as practical examples of our approach to translation. They are available in Francophone African communities and are good translations of the realities in *The Famished Road*. This means that the translator should not try to create new words or grammatical structures. Rather, he should get deviations from *le bon français* which are present in all francophone African countries.

Most of the examples in this section are taken from Cameroonian French, with which I am familiar.

4.5.1 Lexical features

- **Malchanceux.**

A '*malchanceux*' is not someone who is troubled or who has been visited by misfortune. It is someone who causes trouble. Someone who 'looks for trouble' (199) is a '*malchanceux*'.

- **Réparateur de chaussures**

A 'réparateur de chaussures' is someone who repairs shoes. This class of artisans are also called 'koh-koh' because they wander around town knocking their tool boxes with a hammer to announce their presence and draw the attention of anyone who might need their services.

A ‘réparateur de chaussures’ will obviously translate ‘shoe-repairer’ better than ‘resemelleur’.

- **riz sauté.**

‘Riz sauté’ is a francophone equivalent of ‘jollof rice’ (41). It was born out of the name of French dishes like ‘sauté de veau’ or ‘sauté de porc’. If you can cook slices of pork with other ingredients and call it ‘sauté de porc’, then you can also cook rice with other ingredients and call it ‘riz sauté’!

- **vendeur de maïs**

This is someone who roasts and sells fresh corn, or ‘corn-roaster’ (450) as Ben Okri calls them. Someone who stocks bags of dried grains of corn for example, would not be referred to as a ‘vendeur de maïs’.

- **Bouillie**

This is a francophone equivalent of ‘pap’ (126).

- **Le Tourne-dos**

‘Le *tourne-dos’* is a ‘bukka’ (146, 148), a makeshift hut built with bamboo branches and leaves of raffia palm or with corrugated zinc sheets. A ‘tourne-dos’ would usually house a cheap restaurant or a bar where you can buy cheap alcoholic drinks.

- **garri/Tapioca**

Francophones generally refer to cassava as ‘manioc’ and to garri as ‘tapioca’ or ‘garri’ (71, 127, 145, 152, 153, 232).

- **Bambé boy/ Chargeur.**

This is a load carrier (147). Azaro's father is a 'bambé boy' or 'chargeur'. This is an unskilled labourer who wanders around the market place in search of piecework. The 'bambé boy' or 'chargeur' helps to offload lorries or carries shoppers' loads for a small fee.

- **Mallam/ Envoûteur**

This is a charm seller or someone who can use traditional occult practices or charms to heal someone.

- **International (230)**

'Most Cameroonians know '*l'Élève International'* by Jean Miché Kankan. It is a play about a very bright student. 'International' does not necessarily have anything to do with the international scene. It simply means that you are very good at what you do. So, if you are a very good driver for example, you could be called a '*chauffeur international'*. Or if you are a very good photographer (230), you could be called a '*photographe International'*.

- **pousseur (de pousse-pousse)**

If you say 'pousseur' in a market in a francophone town, someone will probably come running with a 'pousse-pousse', a kind of truck or go-cart used from transporting bags of grain or any other type of heavy merchandise from the market to the home. There are many such truck-pushers (147) in every market.

- **noix de cola**

This is a kola-nut.

4.5.2 Phonological features

- **O**

This is represented as 'o' in *The Famished Road* (154 and 223). In African French, it is used to place emphasis on what one is saying at a particular moment. It can be written in several ways: *ô*, a series of 'o's (*oooo*) and *oh* Like in the example below:

> Longue Longue ne reconnaît plus son visage o.
>
> (Appendix G, *Le Popoli*, number 175: 7)

The 'o' stresses that fact that something has happened to the subject's face in the example above. In the next example, which I copied from edition number 176 of *Le Popoli* (p. 9), a woman has just seen something terrible, so she shouts:

- J'ai vuoooo, j'ai vuoooo

(Appendix G, *Le Popoli*, no 176: 9)

In *The Famished Road*, it is attached to the last word, but in the francophone example we have used, it is a separate word.

4.5.3 Grammatical and verbal features

Sometimes a '*semantic shift'* or '*shifted denotation'* (De Klerk, 1994: 274) occurs in a word or a group of words. Ben Okri uses the sentence in *The Famished Road*:

> Anyone who looks for my trouble will get enough trouble for life (199)

There are several ways in which one can say the same thing in a francophone context:

- Si quelqu'un me tente, il va me sentir!

    - Si quelqu'un joue avec moi, il va voir les voirâtres!
- Si quelqu'un entre dans mes cinq mètres cinquante, je vais lui montrer de quel côté je me chauffe!
- Si quelqu'un veut chercher les histoires, je vais lui en donner pour toute la vie.

The examples we have looked at in this section show that there are many linguistic features in the francophone part of Africa from which we can tap. All the translator has to do is get real-life examples rather than inventing neologisms, or explaining or footnoting.

4.5.4 A concrete example of deviation from *le bon français*: Ahmadou Kourouma's *Les Soleils des Indépendances*.

Amadou Kourouma is a Malian although he lived most of his life in the Côte d'Ivoire. He comes from the Malinké tribe, which is spread over three countries: Mali, Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire. His language shows proof of a lot of independence. *Les Soleils des Indépendances* is a unique novel in francophone African literature because he deliberately tapped from his Malinké language and from the Noushi that is spoken in the Côte d'Ivoire. He is a multicultural person and knows how to balance the various faces of his linguistic personality:

> Kourouma's style is that of a bicultural person but he succeeded in super-imposing the Malinké culture on the French – even though he writes in French – somehow wrestling the weaker one to the ground.
>
> (Osofisan, 2000: 221)

Les Soleils des Indépendances is written the way an Ivoirien[13] would speak French. The author does not attempt to disguise the language and make it conform to standards of the Académie Française. He sets his own standards, and paves the way for a literature that is "authentically black, no longer a by-product of western literature" (Osofisan, 2000: 224).

He creates many neologisms from words that exist in the French language. This is very evident in his use of verbs. Thus, according to Kourouma, *fainéantiser* (135) means to be lazy (from the word *fainéant*, or a 'stupid person'), *vaurienniser* (97) means to render useless (from *Vaurien*, which means 'someone who is worthless'), *misérer* (110, 12) means to make poor (from *misère* or 'misery') and *nuiter* (67, 68) means to spend the night (from *la nuit* which means 'the night'). He obtains his verbs by adding the '*er'* to a noun. In French, the '*er'* verbs, also known as the verbs of the first group, account for more than twelve thousand verbs in the language. By using his local syntax in writing the French language, he situates the book within a particular context. At the same time, he challenges those who believe that the French language's purity should not be tampered with.

Another category of African French in *Les Soleils des Indépendances* is the use of substantives where the French language accepts only modifiers (Osofisan, 2000: 229). In French, *"Un homme vide"* means 'an emptied man'. *"Un homme assis"* means 'a seated man'. Such structures can change when the gender changes. Kourouma drops the noun that is being qualified, and changes the qualifier into a noun itself! Thus an emptied man becomes "*un vidé*" (3) and a seated man becomes "*un asis*" (4).

[13] A citizen of Côte d'Ivoire.

Here are a few sentences from the novel that would definitely shock a native speaker of French but sound like music to the ears of a Francophone African:

- Il y avait une semaine qu'avait fini dans la capitale Koné Ibrahima…il n'avait pas supporté un petit rhume…(1)

The novel starts with the death of a Malinké man in the capital city. The author says that '*the man finished'*. The author uses this euphemism because according to Malinké tradition, a man does not die. He '*finishes*' his existence and goes back to Malinké land to be reincarnated as a Malinké baby.

- Bâtard de bâtardise! Gnamokodé! (3)

This is a curse, said in exasperation. It is a repetition of the word 'bastard' in the local language'. Ben Okri uses this same technique when he writes:

- Ours was an abiku nation, a spirit-child nation (494)

The author indicates the same word in an indigenous language and in a European language.

- Vrai sang de maître de guerre! Dis vrai et solide! Dis ce qui t'a égratigné! (6)

The speech starts with some praise singing. Fama, one of the characters, is angry. To appease him, an elder sings his praises. Then he asks him to '*speak the absolute truth'* (dis vrai et solide[14]). In French, this collocation is strange.

- Refroidissez le Cœur! (6).

The writer asks Fama and Bamba to '*calm down'*, or to paraphrase the French sentence, '*to cool their hearts'*.

- C'est pourquoi, à tremper dans la sauce salée à son gout, Fama aurait choisi la colonisation et cela, malgré que les français l'aient spolié. (9).

[14] Speak the absolute and solid truth.

The writer uses the image of sauce with just enough salt to explain that if Fama had his way, he would have chosen the colonial era over independence.

- La mosquée des Dioulas était là (10).

The Dioulas are one of the main tribes in Côte d'Ivoire. The writer does not see the need to explain what it means, just like French writers do not explain what they mean when they talk about '*les Gaulois'* for instance.

History has shown that it pays to use the language that is familiar to one's people. *Les Soleils des Indépendances*, "which ambitiously set about transferring the structures and tonalities of Malinké into French, caused a major upheaval in the writing of African fiction" (Chanda, 1997: 27) and won the Goncourt prize. Calixte Beyala, who is also known for her use of hybrid French (Chanda, 1997: 27) won the *Grand Prix du roman de l'Académie française* in 1996 for her novel *Les Honneurs Perdus*. These writers were recognized because they had the courage to write in the language that they had grown up speaking. Translators have to adapt to this trend in literature. They have to show greater awareness to the mutations in the African linguistic environment. They have to use the language that people are used to. They should not play the role of the Académie Française and impose a standard variety of the French language on Francophones. They should learn to say '*il mouille*" instead of "*il ne joue pas bien*" and not feel like blushing.

CHAPTER FIVE

This research report is not an attempt to discuss all the problems of translation in West African literature. Its focus was on how to translate New Englishes into French in a West African context. And in this case, the study was based on Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*. There are areas that have not been covered: theme, genre, style, setting, local cosmologies and use of names among others. Researchers have to look at these areas and produce more work on how to translate African literature. At the dawn of the twenty first century when people are talking about the African Renaissance, it is necessary to produce relevant research that can translate socio-political slogans and programmes into fact.

5.1 The future of New Englishes

The English language has spread all over the world due to the need for a language of commerce and communication. In the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, French was the language of conferences. Since the end of the First World War and the rise of America, the English language now plays that role. Due to influences from its local habitat, the English that is spoken in Cameroon is obviously different from the English that is spoken in South Africa, for example. The idioms are different, and some words with the same spelling and pronunciation mean different things.

There are still a lot of attitudinal problems that have to be looked into. These exist both among speakers of non-native Englishes as well as speakers of native Englishes. On the one hand, the speakers of native Englishes look down on anyone who cannot

speak their language well. On the other hand, speakers of New Englishes refuse to accept that their varieties of English differ from the ones that are spoken by non-native speakers; some even insist that they speak RP English! (Platt et al, 1984: 170). The problem will always persist if the people and language experts refuse to see that their versions are different because of the feeling that "the real thing comes from overseas - ours is only second best" (Platt et al 1984: 170). Africans have different accents from the English, and the English do not have the same pronunciations as the Americans. So the first major challenge as far as New Englishes is concerned is getting everyone to acknowledge that each region of the world has its own characteristics.

That people speak differently does not make their accents or their choice of language bad. In schools, children who cannot speak or write correct BBC or RP English are usually punished for not assimilating the 'correct standard'. English should be looked at from the point of view of context and what role the language plays in it, rather than from the point of view of correctness and wrongness (Platt et al 1998: 171). New words in a language are usually introduced with a particular aim, even where the word exists within the system of another language. The word biltong[15] is well known in the South African context. It fits into the context better than any other word in the English language.

Languages are constantly evolving and the English language is obviously changing too. There are three ways in which New Englishes can evolve (Platt et al 1984: 198):

(1) A local language as national and/or official language.
No functions or very limited functions for English.

[15] Biltong is dried, salted meat.

(2) A local language as national and/or official language. Some, often quite important, functions for English.

(3) English as national and/or official language, usually with a wide range of functions. Some functions for the local languages.

Several countries have already dropped English in favour of local languages. Malaysia has adopted Malay as the official language of the country. Kenya and Uganda have adopted Kiswahili as official languages while the Philippines now have Filipino as the official language. However, while some ground was lost, some was also gained. Burma and Sri Lanka have reintroduced the use of English in classrooms and in offices.

Option three above is what most African countries prefer. In fact, most countries are stuck with English for the reason that it acts as a neutral alternative because linguistic issues and the choice of one vernacular over the other always carry 'emotional' connotations (Platt et al 1984: 201). A neutral language is usually necessary in situations where there are many languages and a multi-ethnic situation. If one tribe's language is chosen over the others, people from the other tribes would object to it. So it is advantageous to choose an outside language that also opens a window on the rest of the world.

It is important to study the evolution of the English language in its new context in order to know the kind of challenges that it poses to translation and language learning among other things. Understanding of New Englishes helps the individual to understand deviations from *le bon français* because the anglophone and francophone communities face the same challenges and exist within the same contexts. It also helps the individual to understand the diversity that exists within the Commonwealth

and the source of the breath of fresh air that is creeping into the English language. Perhaps the use of New Englishes helped *The Famished Road* to be chosen as the winner of the Booker prize in 1991.

5.2 The future of New Englishes in West African literature.

The decision to write in European languages was taken not only because the writers wanted to get a wider audience. It was also because the indigenous languages had no standardized orthography (Platt et al 1984: 177). Even now that the systems have been standardised, there are still some stumbling blocks in the way of indigenous languages becoming the main languages of literature. Multi-ethnicity and global geopolitical realities force the writer to think global. For the writer to reach a wide audience, he has to use a language that will be understood by as many people as possible. First, he has to look for a publisher, who is probably a European. And then, he has to use the language that will be understood by readers all over the planet. The most important publishers in African literature (Macmillan, Heinemann, Three Continents Press) are mostly based in the West and have shown only "puny interest" (Gérard, 1985: 21) in African literature in vernacular languages.

Just as it is necessary for citizens of countries where non-native varieties of English are spoken to accept and recognise their local New English, so too is it important for writers in these countries to include such features in their books. New Englishes help to anchor the book within a particular setting and give it a face (Platt et al 1984: 187). If Ben Okri decided to write a book in RP or BBC English, what would stop a reader from thinking that the book was written by Joseph Conrad? By the choices he makes, the reader quickly picks up the fact that the book has been written by an African. He

can tell this by looking at cultural facts like "Abiku" (*The Famished Road*, 478) and words like "garri" (127). Such items paint a different picture from what the reader of older commonwealth literature is used too. This choice is a very desirable one because it gives the native of the former colony a good platform to add his voice and vision to world literature. The context in which the book is published plays a major role in the understanding of the text itself (Gérard, 1985: 19)

There are many writers who add New Englishes to their works. Many others do not. Those who do are natives of countries where there are non-native varieties of English. For those who do not, they may be influenced in their choice by one of the following three reasons (Platt et al 1984: 188):

(1) The feeling that their readers in other countries will have difficulty in understanding the dialogue.
(2) The feeling that it is wrong to use what they consider to be 'sub-standard English' even for characters who would, in real life, use it.
(3) An inability to represent the various local forms of English appropriate to the particular character.

Point two above is very relevant if we consider that teachers in schools clamp down on all those who do not speak 'perfect English' all the time when they are at school. All those who speak 'bad English' are made to wear boards around their necks with the words 'I AM STUPID' or 'I AM A DONKEY' (Ngugi, 1981: 11).

This said, it is worth noting that New English is now a permanent feature in the writing of most writers from former colonies. From Raja Rao in India to Ben Okri in Africa, writers are making their characters speak like people do in real life. They have created an Afroromance language (Gérard, 1985: 21). Within the African context,

researchers and translators have to pay close attention to this because the same patterns are being replicated in francophone Africa. The writers try to make their books reflect the realities of the countries in which they set their books and for this reason "linguistic developments in African literatures will be fascinating to watch for a long time to come" (Gérard, 1985: 21).

There is still a lot of untapped talent if we take into account the fact that most West African countries still use a lot of English, rather than African literary texts in their syllabuses. In Cameroon for example, authors like Marlowe, George Eliot, Mark Twain, Charles Dickens and Thomas Hardy still feature prominently in the General Certificate of Education syllabus. The only local authors are Linus Asong (1999) and Nsanda Eba (1977). African literature in European languages is still in its infancy and for it to develop at a sustainable and adequate pace, I believe that it has to be accompanied by a growth in translation and in translators.

5.3 The Future of the Translation of New Englishes in West Africa

Western researchers have spent a lot of time and effort researching on how best to translate Western literature. There are documents on translation theory that date back to the time before Christ (Robinson, 1997b). It is easy to find documents and references with which to work. Databases like the *Index Translationum* have a lot of information on books that have been translated. The *Index Translationum* even has a top 50 list of countries with the most translations. There is only one African country on that list (Egypt), the rest are western countries (see Appendix C).

African countries and researchers have to take centre stage in all the aspects of their literature. This research report has focused primarily on the West African region of Africa. However, the findings are true for the entire African continent. West Africa is just a microcosm in a macrocosm. In the course of my research, I did not see any data on translated texts from any part of Africa.

Translation and translation theory has an important role to play in African literature. It is important to realise that there are several translation styles and that to maintain the flavour of the original text, the translator has to make the right choice when it comes to choosing an approach to his translation. The target community reader has to feel the same sensations that the source text reader felt when he was reading the original text. This is a difficult feat to achieve. It does not depend only on the approach that is adopted. But I feel that the right approach is one that takes into account the realities of post-colonial West African literature.

African translators have not yet had a significant impact on the translation of African literature. No single translator has had the same impact that translators like Deciderius Erasmus, Madame de Staël, Montaigne, Geoffrey Chaucer, Willa and Edwin Muir and many others had on European literature. It is not only because most of the literature that is published is done so by Eurocentric publishing houses, but also because the African translators and writers themselves lack the necessary 'modern literary skills' (Gérard, 1985: 23) and during the interim period, while they acquire these skills, their work is being done by Westerners.

For translation to have a more significant impact on West African literature, the following things have to be done:

1. The translators have to know the linguistic terrain and be aware of the constant changes in the indigenous languages as well as the European languages.
2. They have to be schooled in the various theories of translation that exist and how to use them. Some people acquire this by instinct. Others have to go to school to learn it.
3. They have to understand African literature and African history in general because their work is an important part of African literature. In fact, the translator should be an essential arm of African literature.
4. They have to be ready to take important decisions in the course of their work. In literary translation, the translator should be able to enjoy a great deal of 'translator's licence', that is, he should have the freedom to change songs, words based on his personal understanding of the target community.

I believe that as the economic situations of African countries improve, they are going to get more involved in the literatures of their countries. People will want to read books about their local realities. They will want to include more local books in the syllabuses of the primary, secondary and tertiary cycles. This also means greater exchange between African countries and more involvement by writers and translators. After all, they are neighbours, they have similar cultures, and they are seeking closer

co-operation through structures like Nepad[16] and the AU[17]. Translation – and good translation too – is a good way to achieve that!

[16] The New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development.
[17] The African Union.

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