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Fagunwa in translation: aesthetic and ethics in the translation of African language literature

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the aesthetics and ethics of translating African literature, using a case of two of D.O. Fagunwa's Yoruba novels, namely; *Igbo Olodumare* (1949) translated by Wole Soyinka as *In the Forest of Olodumare* (2010) and *Adiitu Olodumare* (1961) translated by Olu Obafemi as *The Mysteries of God* (2012). More specifically, the overall aim of this study is to determine the positions of these target texts on the domestication and foreignization continuum. The study of these texts is carried out using a descriptive and systemic theoretical framework, based on Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS), Polysystem theory and the notion of norms of translational behaviour. The descriptive approach is extended by drawing on ideological and ethical approaches to translating postcolonial and marginalized literature. Lambert and Van Gorp's model for the description of translation products is used in exploring the position of Fagunwa's translated novels in the target literary system. A close comparative analysis of a number of extracts from the two target texts and their corresponding source texts is conducted in order to determine the approaches taken by both translators in their translation of the distinctive stylistic features of Fagunwa's prose. Building on the work of Christopher Fotheringham (2015) in the field of stylistic analysis of translated African prose, this study describes and analyses the occurrence of shifts of formal literary features between these target texts and their corresponding source texts. This is done by employing Antoine Berman's scheme of deforming tendencies and Anton Popovič's scheme of stylistic shifts as the basis for the translational shift analysis.