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On Translating Postcolonial African Writing: French Translation of Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*

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Introduction

Like many postcolonial African novels written in English, *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) written by Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie presents many instances of literary hybridity. This paper focuses on these occurrences of hybridity and examines their translation from English into French. The paper considers various manifestations of hybridity in the novel and compares them with the novel's French translation to illuminate translation strategies while analyzing the implications of key translation choices. This paper emphasizes that the translator made a significant effort to employ ethnocentric strategies to preserve the resonances of the author's culture, especially instances of vernacular language inherent in the original text. The paper also notes seemingly arbitrary choices that exoticize and homogenize the translated text. Despite these instances, this paper concludes that the translation managed to maintain a balance between the source text and the target language.

The Author, the Novel and the Writing Style

Chimamanda Adichie, who some critics have hailed as Achebe's successor, is a well-known Nigerian writer. Her novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* was the winner of the 2007 Orange Broadband Prize. The novel was first published in 2006 by Knopf/Anchor, and was later republished by Vintage Canada. In 2008, the novel was translated into French by Mona de Pracontal under the title *L'autre moitié du soleil,* and was published in France by Éditions Gallimard. The translation won the Baudelaire Translation Prize in 2009. Set against the backdrop of civil war-torn southeastern Nigeria (the Nigeria-Biafra war) from 1967-70, *Half of a Yellow Sun* centers on five major characters: Olanna; her twin sister, Kainene; Odenigbo, Olanna's lover and university professor; Ugwu, Odenigbo's village houseboy; and Richard, Kainene's English boyfriend, who decides to fight for the Biafran cause. Through the experiences of these characters, Adichie expounds on the conflicted legacies of colonialism and recounts the gruesome genocide committed against the Igbo people of Nigeria. In an interview titled *The Story behind the Book*, Chimamanda Adichie, in the same manner as Achebe, described her inspiration and the source of the story she portrays in *Half of a Yellow Sun*:

> I read books. I looked at photos. I talked to people. In the four years that it took to finish the book, I would often ask older people I met, "Where were you in 1967?" and then take it from there. It was from stories of that sort that I found out tiny details that are important

> for fiction. My parents' stories formed the backbone of my research. Still, I have a lot of research notes that I did not end up using because I did not want to be stifled by fact, did not want the political events to overwhelm the human story.[1]

Against the backdrop of the war and through the perspective of Ugwu, Adichie presents the Igbo society of Nigeria as it emerges from colonialism—a society struggling to balance norms and beliefs, religious practices, and social and family rituals. Adichie's distinctive style of writing presents a peculiar language that depicts the narrative as both a human story and as a lived experience. Edmund's White praise of *Half of a Yellow Sun*, which appears on the back cover of the novel, confirms the above statement: "What is so memorable and accomplished about *Half of a Yellow Sun* is that […] events are never dryly recited; rather they are felt through the medium of lived lives, of actual aching sensitive experiences." For Adichie, language becomes an indispensable tool for the narration of the life of a given people and of their intimate experiences in a manner that the reader is equally immersed in the story and in its unique environment. Discussing the novel's narrator and narrative, White further posits:

> To my knowledge it is unusual for a young woman author to capture with such precision and verisimilitude the feelings of a man, but Ugwu is a totally realized character, ambitious, devoted […]. These characteristics, easy to rattle off, are all dramatized and substantiated in this long and intricate but always compelling narrative. (*Half of a Yellow Sun* n.p.)

The ingenuity of Adichie's narrative is her ability to exploit and indigenize (Zabus 2007) the colonial language such that it becomes capable of expressing the sociocultural realities and unique experiences of the Igbo. Adichie contextualizes not only her story, but also the language used to convey that story, without impeding the universal rules and grammars of the English language. For Adichie, writing in English language entails an appropriation of the language in a manner that it reflects the Nigerian postcolonial situation and its particular burden of cultural experience. The language of *Half of a Yellow Sun* is unique and innovative, like that of most postcolonial African writers, and evidences the use of various stylistic devices, the objective of which is to address the problem of the use of colonial languages to express African realties and cultural experiences. These devices or strategies of appropriation are commonly described as elements of hybridity.

Hybridity in *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Hybridity is a literary aesthetic that has been exemplified in various postcolonial African novels, and which has gained attention in both Postcolonial Studies and in Translation Studies. Hybridity has been defined by Bandia (2008) as the "creation of an in-between *language culture* which indeed reflects the real condition of African postcolonial discourse" (9). It is manifested in postcolonial African texts through various mediums and on various levels, which, according to Zabus (2007:49), can either

[1] Interview with the author published on http://chimamanda.com/books/half-of-a-yellow-sun/the-story-behind-the-book/

appear as visible traces in the text or as traces within traces. For the analysis in this paper, three elements of hybridity are identified in *Half of a Yellow Sun*.

The most prominent "trace" employed by Chimamanda Adichie is her inclusion of various languages, in the form of words or sentences integrated into the colonial language of the narration. The use of various linguistic forms or textual code-switching is, according to Zabus (85), the most visible trace and most common form of linguistic exploitation in the African novel. The London *Times* made a similar observation of the first pages of Adichie's novel: "Adichie uses layers of history, symbol and myth… [and] uses language with relish. She infuses her English with a robust poetry, and the narrative is cross-woven with Igbo idiom and language." (*Half of Yellow Sun* n.p.) Adichie's use of various linguistic codes is significant, as more than four languages appear in the novel, including Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, and pidgin. As this paper will later argue, Adichie's inclusion of each of these four languages performs a different linguistic and social function that helps readers to understand the text. Another significant characteristic of Adichie's text that could be categorized in Zabus's terminology as "traces within traces" is what has been termed "relexification" or transliteration. Zabus defines "relexification" is as a process through which the colonial language is manipulated in such a way that it "conveys an unfamiliar message" and suggests the underlying presence of another language. She explains that relexification occurs when the "African writer attempts to simulate the character of African speech-using English vocabulary but indigenous structures and rhythms" in a Europhone text (101). As observed in Adichie's novel, relexification often involves a process of direct translation from the Igbo language into English, the result of which are English sentences that sound like oral Igbo. Adichie's use of these devices fulfils a cultural function, for they are understood here as an attempt to negotiate cultural spaces through language. This technique also results in the use of repetition, another literary device and hybrid strategy that this paper will consider. Adichie's use of repetition introduces into the English language a rhythmic oral structure associated with Igbo oral discourse, in which repetition is an important linguistic element for the placement of emphasis.

The above elements of hybridity in Adichie's novel create the aforementioned in-between *language culture***,** which maintains the original African Igbo discourse. These elements are based on Igbo culture and are influenced by linguistic elements of the Igbo language. Situating hybridity in the cultural universe of the novel enables an understanding of the message and the motivations behind Adichie's use of these devices. For this reason, elements of hybridity are sometimes referenced as "local colours" or "culturally [or socially] bound occurrences" (Zabus 2007:175). For example, Bandia pointed out that African writers' use of various languages in a literary text has a pragmatic function associated with the "situational factors that [can] shape linguistic behavior in traditional African society in a manner different from that of European languages and cultures" (39). Given the significant presence of the above-mentioned forms of hybridity, it is important to examine these instances and how they are

translated into French while considering their origin, their context, and the culture from which they emerge.[2]

The aim of this paper is not to criticize, but to illuminate various strategies of translation, and to reflect on these translation strategies. This perspective is adopted from the theory that Berman presents in *Pour une critique de traduction: John Donne*. Berman's method suggests the necessity for an investigation of the source text in terms of stylistic regularities, rhythm, and metaphoric networks, which are retraced in the translated work. In the case of *Half of a Yellow Sun*, networks of meaning are embedded in the various forms of hybridity identified above. The section that follows examines these instances of hybridity in the novel's translated text to determine how they are communicated in the French language, and comments on the implications of some choices made in the text's translation.

Vernacular and Other Linguistic Codes

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, vernacular language plays the dominant role of "reminder."[3] Vernacular language reminds the reader that an oral literature (orature) exists in the local vernacular language that forms the backbone of the writer's creativity and the narrative. Adichie, who is from the Igbo region of Nigeria, evinces this metatext and orature by importing Igbo words and expressions into her oeuvre. *Half of a Yellow Sun* reveals abundant heterolingualism, including the incorporation of Igbo, Pidgin, and Hausa, and a study of the occurrence of vernacular in the novel indicates that the author inserts vernacular phrases both on the intersentential (between two sentences) and the intrasentential (within a sentence boundary) levels (Saville-Troike 2003). This study discovered that there is no remarkable pattern of appearance among these instances of the vernacular, as vernacular phrases appear within sentences, outside sentences, at the beginning of a sentence, or even as an independent sentence. Below is an example from *Half of a Yellow Sun* (HYS) and its French translation in *L'autre moitié du soleil* (L'AMS):

> "*Ẹzi okwu*[4]? You've really moved in, haven't you? Odenigbo was laughing." HYS (60)
> "Yes, but these are better, *fa makali*, Olanna said." HYS (59)

[2] Having said the above, it has been recognized that that some of the visible traces of hybridity do not portray cultural occurrences. Examples include the use of local language for words such as "madam," "thank you," "what happened," etc. Batchelor (2009: 52) argues that rather than denote items that are peculiar to a particular culture, these phrases are employed by postcolonial African writers to show that the characters are speaking in a different language and to show how such words or sentences would be said in a given African language. This is true for some examples presented from the corpus. Instead of representing culturally-bound information, these phrases "represent more generally the culture and language that lie behind the French text" (53). They also perform a given pragmatic function. Throughout this paper, such examples are discussed based on a particular linguistic or social performance and based on their use in the text.

[3] The role played by the vernacular in Adichie's text aligns with Tymockzo's article. Writing on the role of vernacular in postcolonial African writing, Tymockzo (1999:25) affirmed that the vernacular plays the role of reminder, as vernacular phrases remind the reader that there exists a metatext from which the African writer writes.

[4] 'Really?

> "*Ezi okwu* ? – Tu as emménagé pour de bon, hein ? Odenigbo riait. " L'AMS (85)
> "Oui mais celles-ci sont mieux, *fa makali* dit Olanna." L'AMS (83)

The significant number and indistinct pattern of vernacular phrases suggest a deliberate linguistic border-crossing on the part of the author. The author even codeswitches between the English and Igbo languages on the dedication page of the novel:

> My grandfathers, whom I never knew,
> Nwoye David Adichie and Aro-Nweke Felix Odigwe,
> did not survive the war.
>
> My grandmothers, Nwabuodu Regina Odigwe and
> Nwamgbafor Agnes Adichie, remarkable women both, did.
>
> This book is dedicated to their memories:
> *Ka fa nodu na ndokwa*[5],
>
> And to Mellitus, wherever he may be.

The French version reads :

> *Mes grands-pères que je n'ai jamais connus,*
>
> *Nwoye David Adichie, et Aro-Nweke Felix Odigwe*
> *n'ont pas survécu la guerre.*
>
> *Mes grand-mères, Nwabuodu Regina Odigwe et Nwamgbafor Agnes Adichie toutes deux des femmes remarquables, y ont survécu.*
>
> *Ce livre est dédié à leur mémoire :*
>
> Ka fa nodu na ndokwa
>
> *Et à Mellitus, où qu'il puisse être.*

Furthermore, on the second and the third pages of the novel, there are seven instances of codeswitching, primarily including the pidgin word *sah* (HYS p.6–7). These examples demonstrate the fluctuations in language inherent in the text, which the translator must strive either to preserve or to render less visible. From the extract above, and from a study of the novel's French translation, it is generally observed that the translator of the novel, Mona de Pracontal, preserved the original text's vernacular phrases by not translating them. Much like in the source text, the translator used italics to demarcate vernacular phrases from French ones, with the exception of the dedication page, on which she italicised the French phrases. Some extracts from the novel appear below:

[5] May they rest in peace.

Table 1:

French Target Language – L'AMS	**English Source Language-HYS**
« Bon voyage, *ije oma* » dit-il. (51)	"Safe journey, *ije oma*" he said. (33)
« *Egbukwala* ! Ne le tuez pas ! » (84)	"*Egbukwala* ! Don't kill it!" (60)
« *Gini me*? Qu'est-ce qu'elle a sa mère ? » (146)	"*Gini me*? What is wrong with his mother?" (111)
« Mummy Ola, pleure pas, *ebezi-na* » dit Baby. (631)	"Mummy Ola, don't cry; *ebezi-na*" Baby said. (517)
« Grandpa disait que ça empire toujours avant de s'arranger. *O dikata njo o dikwa mma* » dit Kainene (597)	"Grandpa used to say that it gets worse and then it gets better. *O dikata njo o dikwa mma*" Kainene said. (489)
« Nous sommes tous biafrais! *Anyincha bu Biafra*! » dit Kainene. (492)	"We are all Biafrans*! Anyincha bu Biafra*!" Kainene said. (402)
« Ne mens pas Olanna Ozobia, *i sikwana asi* ! » cria Mama Dozie… (301)	"Do not lie Olanna Ozobia*, i sikwana asi*!" Mama Dozie shouted… (240)
« Pourquoi tu te sers de réchaud à kérosène? Cria-t-elle. *I na ezuzu ezuzu*? Tu es stupide ou quoi? » (471)	"Why are you the kerosene stove? she shouted. *I na ezuzu ezuzu*? Are you stupid?" (375)

Table 2:

French Target Language –L'AMS	**English Source Language-HYS**
Sa mère lui frictionnait le corps avec de *l'okwuma*… (33)	His mother would rub his body with *okwuma*… (17)
« *Ezi okwu* ? Tu as emménagé pour de bon, hein? » Odenigbo riait. (85)	"*Ezi okwu* ? You have really moved in, haven't you?" Odenigbo was laughing. (60)
« Baby *ezigbo nwa*, comment te sens tu ? » (412)	"Baby *ezigbo nwa*, how are you?" (334)
« Tu imagines dans quelle situation tu seras maintenant ? *O di egwu*! » (297)	"Can you imagine what situation you would have been in now? *O di egwu*!" (237)
« Un jour je vais blesser gravement Harrison, *maka chukwu* » dit Jomo. (154-155)	"One day, I will wound Harrison seriously, *maka chukwu*," Jomo said. (118)
Mama Dozie quant à elle, ceuillait des cocoyams dans l'*agu*. (301)	Mama Dozie herself had been away harvesting cocoyams in the *agu*. (240)

The first table contains instances in which the meaning of the vernacular phrases is understandable from the surrounding sentences, or from the context in which each phrase appears. By explaining the vernacular phrases herself, the author *voluntarily* ensures that there is no information gap between reader and text. The second category contains cases in which there is no visible or hidden meaning to the vernacular phrase within the sentences, and no footnote or explanation that follows and explains the phrase. Although this lack of explanation in the translation does not entirely impede the reader's understanding of their meaning, the cultural references in the original text would likely be lost on the reader of the French version, as exemplified in the following extract: "One day, I will wound Harrison seriously, *maka chukwu*" (HYS 118). *Maka chukwu* is a swear word in Igbo language that means "in the name of God." Because the author does not explicitly explain this phrase in the text, the French reader is deprived of the knowledge that the speaker swore that he would harm Harrison. One major issue raised by these examples is that the problem of translating linguistic codes is not necessarily limited to the reader's understanding of the language used, but rather, translation raises the question of what given social role language plays in the text and how it may be conserved or lost in translation. It is generally accepted that the different languages in a text play different discourse functions, which include but are not limited to quotation, repetition, interjection, emphasis, and clarification (Gumperz 75-83). For example, such discourse functions are illustrated in the extract, "Yes, but these are better, *fa makali*." *Fa makali* which also means 'these are better' has a repetitive and emphatic function as the speaker foregrounds her choice of clothing, a function which may be lost on a French reader who does not speak the vernacular language. A similar example can be seen in the case illustrated below, in which vernacular language plays not only a discourse function but also a pragmatic one:

> Back in the kitchen, Ugwu was surprised to hear Master's mother singing a gently melodious church song: *Nya nya oya mu ga-ana.*
> *Na m metu onu uwe ya aka*…. (HYS 160)

> Du retour à la cuisine, Ugwu fut surpris d'entendre la mère de Master qui chantait un chant église doux et mélodieux : *Nya nya oya mu ga-ana.*
> *Na m metu onu uwe ya aka*…. (L'AMS 160)

Similar to the original, the translation provides neither implicit nor explicit information about the song, and despite that the inclusion of the vernacular does not disrupt the meaning of the text, the vernacular language song produces more reaction from a native speaker who understands not only the meaning but also the context of the song. In Adichie's story, Odenigbo's mother hates Olanna, her son's fiancée, and thinks that an evil spirit or sorcery explains why her son could not produce a child. The song excerpted above is derived from the biblical story of a woman with diseased blood who hopes that, if she touches the helm of Jesus's garment, she will be healed. The song indicates Odenigbo's mother's uncanny belief that his son will produce a child despite the suspected sorcery undertaken by Olanna. In traditional Igbo society, childlessness is considered a grave illness, and a married woman without a child may face serious injustice and maltreatment. As a consequence of his wife's barrenness,

Odenigbo's mother brings a young teenage wife for her son because she considers Olanna a barren sorceress. Hence, the song highlights contextual information which, as observed in the extracts above, is not obvious in the French version of the text[6]. On one hand, one could explain the translator's choice not to translate these phrases as an attempt to preserve the foreign element of the text. On the other hand, the choice could also be explained by unfamiliarity, linguistic and contextual distance between the two languages (Igbo and French), and perhaps by the lack of previously-translated versions of the song in question. A look at the case of a poem that Adichie cites in the novel illustrates this last conjecture. On page 106 of HYS, Adichie inserts an extract of Robert Browning's poem "The Pied Piper of Hamelin." Adichie removes and rewords some parts of the poem, as some words are missing in the original. In the French version of the text, the French translator makes use of an extant French translation of the poem by Marianne Coasta and Astrid Caudère, and duly references these translators in a footnote. Unlike Adichie's adapted version, which contains no mention of Browning as the original author of the poem, De Pracontal's version of the poem is longer, as she did not remove or modify Costa and Caudère's translation of the poem as Adichie did with Browning's original poem. Unlike the case of the Igbo vernacular song, Browning's poem is well-known and has been translated into French. Reflecting on the discrepancy between the original and translated poems highlights the problem associated with translating poems and songs into other languages, for critics have argued that any such translation risks "varying degrees of divergence" (Davies and Bentahila 247) from the original text. Kingei (2002) has identified several instances of "mistranslation" in the case of African songs and poems through the *Song of Lawino,* written by the late Ugandan poet Okot p'Bitek. The poem, which was written in the Acholi language of Uganda, was translated by the writer himself, who faced various problems related to prosodic rules—a situation which may lead the translator to make the simpler choice of non-translation. The objective of this inquiry is not to delve into details of the translation of songs or poems; rather, it is to show that there exist numerous challenges related to the translation of vernacular phrasing, whether these phrases appear in song or prose. In general, not only do the untranslated linguistic codes avoid these problems, most importantly, they maintain this element of hybridity of the original text. However, these phrases do not carry the same socio-cultural import to the non-native reader as they do to the native reader, as has been demonstrated in translation studies[7] and in discourse analysis.[8] With this in mind, the translator is faced with the problem of maintaining balance between foreignness or effacing them in translation.

In a bid for such balance, Mona de Pracontal made use of footnotes to explain some of the vernacular phrasing in Adichie's novel. In accordance with Delisle (2013), footnotes appear in L'AMS for the purpose of the explanation of words that are culturally peculiar to the Igbo African setting. Several examples are provided below.

[6] It is recognised that the English reader who does not speak the vernacular has an equally difficult time accessing the meaning of these African terms. This is why these strategies of appropriation are regarded as subversive to cultural and linguistic imperialism (see Ashcroft et al. 2002)
[7] See Bandia (2008) and Masubelele (2011).
[8] See Myers Scotton (1993) and Callahan (2004).

Example 1:

> He smelled something sweet, heady, as they walked into a **compound**… (HYS 4)
> Il sentit une odeur sucrée, entêtante, lorsqu'ils s'avancèrent dans la **concession**… (LAMS 16)
> **Foot note** : Concession: désigne un système de logement organisé autour d'une courcentrale, avec cuisine et salle de bains communes à toutes les familles, chaque unité donnant également sur une arrière-cour, Les familles aisées disposent d'une concession entière. (Toutes les notes sont de la traductrice.)

Example 2 :

> …her **wrapper** hanging low enough …. (HYS 9)
> … le **lappa** nouée assez bas …. (LAMS 23)
> **Footnote** : Lappa : sorte de pagne qui se porte nouée autour de la taille avec un corsage, ou autour de la poitrine. Les hommes, aussi bien les femmes, en portent.

Example 3:

> Chioke, the junior wife would be tending the pot of watery **soup**. (HYS 8)
> Chioke la plus jeune épouse devait surveiller la marmite de **sauce** trop claire. (L'AMS 22)
> **Footnote** : Soup : Le repas type se compose d'une sorte de soupe ou ragout qu'on appelleen général sauce, accompagné d'un féculent (garri, foufou) : on roule ce dernier enboulettes qu'on trempe dans la sauce.

Example 4:

> I have to attend an ***umuada*** meeting. (HYS 300)
> Je dois participer à une réunion des ***umuada***. (AMS 370)
> **Footnote** : umuada : Femmes de la communauté.

Example 5:

> ...perform rituals with her fellow ***ogbanje.*** (HYS 300)
> …accomplir des rituels avec ces camarades ***ogbanje.*** (LAMS 371)
> **Footnote** : ogbanje : Fantômes des enfants mort-nés qui reviennent torturer leurs mères.

According to Delisle, such footnotes « apporte des éclaircissements au moyen d'un développement plus ou moins long et dans le but général de communiquer l'information présumée inconnue des lecteurs » (285). De Pracontal's footnotes align with Delisle's description given that they furnish the target reader with necessary and previously unknown information. Moreover, the sparse use of footnotes in L'AMS underscores Delisle's assertion, as the translator provided notes only for those

words that she considered unknown, and perhaps for those whose meanings are polemic. To illustrate further, it should be noted that the French translations in *Things Fall Apart* of words such as *compound*, *soup,* and *umuada* have been highlighted by scholars for their contestable French translations (Ugochukwu 2014; Madueke & Rao 2016). The accuracy of the cultural explanations given by Mona de Pracontal in the footnotes is worthy of commendation. Given that there are only twelve footnotes in the 658-page novel (four of which are intertextual references), it seems plausible that the translator may have chosen to clarify as few problematic words as she felt appropriate.

Pidgin and "Deformed English"

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the shift to vernacular languages is intentional, suggests a cultural shift, and foregrounds Adichie's attempt to negotiate the social position of characters through dialogue. Throughout the novel, the use of pidgin distinguishes between educated and uneducated characters. At the very beginning of the novel, the narrator Ugwu, the illiterate village houseboy, introduces the reader to Master (or Odenigbo), a Western-educated Nigerian. He is described as "a little crazy—he had spent too many years reading books overseas" (HYS, 3). In the paragraphs that follow, Adichie makes use of pidgin English to delineate the class differences between the English-ignorant Ugwu and his learned Master. Ugwu's responses of *"yes sah!*" (instead of the grammatically correct "yes sir!") to Odenigbo's instructions reinforce his social position. Ozulu (1992) confirms that the variety of codes used in the novel play different social functions, and emphasizes the need to "differentiate between the standard and the non-standard languages" (371) in the translated version. Mona de Pracontal employed the word "patron" to translate *sah*, and the source aesthetic and social ideals are successfully communicated through this translation in the French version. The French reader of the text may easily grasp that the speaker is uneducated from the translated phrase. In *Code-switching and Code-mixing in African Creative Writing*, Bandia (1996) reiterates that codeswitching in African writing has pragmalinguistic functions such as "foregrounding, identity, focusing, distancing, and neutralization"[9] (144), which should be transferred in interlingual translation. While some examples in the translation maintain these functions, others cited below contradict this assertion, as they indicate that the pragmalinguistic function is not always preserved in the translated text:

> My brother get problem before because the first wife is not pregnant and the second wife is not pregnant. There is one leaf that the dibia give him and he begin to chew.
> Now he has pregnant the wives. (HYS 93)

[9] Identity is the use of language as a means of solidarity. Focusing is the use of language to isolate the addressee. Distancing is used to exclude. Foregrounding occurs when a speaker uses a code that appeals to one person. Foregrounding is the opposite of neutralization, which is the use of codeswitching to neutralize the effect that a message would have if carried in another code (Bandia 1996:144-145).

> Avant mon frère est dans le problème parce que la première femme n'est pas enceinte et la deuxième femme n'est pas enceinte. Il y a une feuille que le dibia lui donne et il commence à mâcher. Maintenant, il a enceinté les deux femmes. (L'AMS 124)

Despite the translator's obvious effort to retain the various functions played by the use of pidgin, some translation choices still fail to represent the same linguistic choice and social function as does the original. Some sentences are modified or standardized in the target language. For example, the first sentence, "my brother get problem," which is translated as « mon frère est dans le problème », illustrates the non-standardization of the original language, as the translator could have employed the verb "avoir - to have" rather than "être - to be." Hence, a grammatically correct translation of the text would read: « Avant mon frère avait un problème ». The lack of the past tense in the source text—"Now he has pregnant the wives"—also highlights the fact that the speaker is a gardener who likely has little education or exposure to the English language. Although the verbal expression « enceinter une femme » is African francophone and is of familiar vernacular usage, it is not clear why the translator made use of the past tense—« a enceinté »—knowing that the source version did not employ the past tense. De Pracontal's use of the familiar vernacular expression attests to a translation choice and to a quest for an equally informal form in the French translation of the text. Nevertheless, the French version employed correct grammatical forms to translate what was an otherwise grammatically incorrect phrase in the source text, which at times effaces the underlining message of the passage. The examples here suggest that these translation choices may have been arbitrary, as the translated text evidences neither total adherence to the original text nor a complete disrespect of the source text's linguistic and pragmatic value.

Repetitions

In the previous extract, the *unnecessary* repetition of "first **wife is not pregnant** and **second wife is not pregnant**" was equally maintained in the French version as « la première **femme n'est pas enceinte** et la deuxième **femme n'est pas enceinte** ». Most interestingly, there was no attempt to render the French translation more elegant—even though such a change may have been deserving in this case. In contrast, in other cases of such repetition, the translation choice is not entirely predictable, as can be seen in the three examples provided below.

Source - HYS	Target L'AMS
For Professor Land, I am making many different-different salad. (92)	Pour professeur Land, y a beaucoup façons que je fais salade. (123)

Source - HYS	Target – L'AMS
Remembering his mother's last illness, when she had coughed and coughed until his father left before dawn to get the dibia… (110)	Le souvenir de la dernière maladie de sa mère qui avait toussé tellement que son père avait fini par partir chercher le dibia avant l'aube… (145)

Source (English)	Target (French)
"Have you finished cooking?" "No sah. I will finish fast fast, before I go." (93)	« Tu as fini la cuisine ? » « Non, patron. Je vais finir vite vite, avant de partir ». (146)

The first example provided above presents two concerns. First, the speaker does not speak English well, and the repetition of the word "different" could be interpreted as pidgin. Second, this phrasing could be understood as explicit repetition for the purposes of emphasis. The former occurs in the case of the French text, as the translator favored the importance of the pidgin undertone over the phrase's emphatic function. In the French version, the translator omits the words « il » and « de », as the sentence should have *correctly* read, « il y a beaucoup de façons » rather than « y a beaucoup façons ». Such omissions, normally observable in informal and conversational French, could be understood as a manner by which the translation indicates that the language used by the speaker is different from standard English. However, it should be remarked that the repetition of the word "different" is lost in the translated version of the text, and that the oral rhythmic discourse of the origin text is also lost. Therefore, this element of literary hybridity becomes invisible in the translated text. The third example differentiates itself from the first and the second, as the translator replaces the repeated word in the phrase "coughed and coughed" with an adverb of intensity, « tellement » or "so much," a word that equally serves quantifying and emphatic functions. A direct retranslation of the French text into English would read: "…she had coughed so much (toussé tellement) that…" The synonymous problem with the last two extracts is that the translated text represents a willful case of "rationalization and ennoblement" (Berman 284). In the first translation, rather than repeating the word "different," the translation is "ennoble[d]" by the substitution of the word « façons » or "ways," while the word « tellement » or "so much" ennobles the repetition of the word "cough." In other words, the syntactic features and sentence structures are modified and ameliorated by the removal of repetition in the sentences. The ennoblement enables a smooth reading in a standard French language to the detriment of the original text whose objective is to recreate the original discourse of the Igbo language through the incorporation of this aspect of hybridity.

Transliterations/Direct Translations

Bandia and other scholars have observed that African writers often implement direct translations of oral narratives into colonial languages (*Writing and Translating Francophone African Discourse* 14). Examples of this implementation abound in Adichie's text:

> "Thank, sah, Thank, sah. May another person do for you." (HYS 112)
>
> « Merci patron, merci patron. Puisse une autre personne faire autant pour vous. » (L'AMS 147)

"May another person do for you" is a literal translation of "*Ka onye ozo melu gi (May another do same favor for you)*," which is an Igbo manner of showing gratitude to a benefactor.

> *Ka* — May
> *onye ozo* — another person
> *melu gi* — do for you

The word "same" is implicit in the sentence. However, in an effort to standardize the language or make the French sentence more understandable, the translator added the word « autant » or "same," thereby replacing the unique oral linguistic patterning of the original text and conforming the original text to the target language form. This example shows a clear case of addition and explicitation. Another example of transliteration as a form of literary hybridity can be seen in the case below:

> Kainene should leave Port Harcourt until we know whether the war is coming or going. (HYS, 235)
>
> Kainene devrait quitter Port Harcourt tant qu'on ne sait pas si cette guerre s'installe ou se termine. (L'AMS 295)

Adichie's use of the phrase "coming or going" is inspired by the Igbo oral linguistic forms of *ibia* and *ina*. It is noteworthy that the translator beautifully grasps the meaning of the phrase; however, the translation cannot capture the oral rhetoric of the phrase "coming and going," which may be literally translated as « vient ou va » in French. The translation enhanced the source material by the implementation of a more elegant style, the result of which, according to Berman, is "an annihilation of the oral rhetoric and formless polylogic of the source text" (Munday, 222). The French version retranslates into English as "if the war is taking place or is coming to an end."

Likewise, in the aforementioned passage—"*Master was a little bit crazy, he has spent too many years reading books overseas*"—"igu akwukwo" is an Igbo verbal construction ("*Igu"* means *"*to read*"* and *"akwukwo"* means "book"), which means "to study."

> Master était un peu fou ; il avait passé trop d'années à lire des livres à l'étranger. (L'AMS 18)

Adichie certainly knows the English word "study," but she captured the Igbo language in its direct translation into English. Contrary to the examples cited above, the translation above employs the same verb in French as in the original text, and thereby captures same oral effect in the English version.

Conclusion

Through intimate study of *Half of a Yellow Sun* and its French translation*, L'autre moitié du soleil*, this paper has illustrated the challenges of translating postcolonial African writing in English into other European languages. Due to the various elements of hybridity inherent in the text, the translator must voluntarily or involuntarily omit, suppress, or alter social and cultural references that are present in the source text. According to Tymockzo, the translator of postcolonial texts makes several key choices:

to translate the text based on her or his understanding of the text's surface meaning, to omit vernacular phrases completely, to choose an equivalent to the vernacular phrase in the receptor culture, to add an explanatory classifier or an explicit explanation to an untranslated phrase, or to import the word untranslated and unexplained (25). Mona de Pracontal, the translator of Adichie's novel, chose to import untranslated vernacular phrases, to preserve and suppress some oral stylistics in the original, and finally, to make use of several explanatory notes. These translation choices are eclectic, as they alternate between maintaining "naturalness" (Low 192) in the target culture and externalizing the translation (Adejunmobi 179)—strategies that are commonly known as domestication and foreignization, respectively. The act of translating cultural elements while respecting the source culture is a strategy that Venuti (1995) calls "foreignization of the text," while a domesticated text overlooks the elements of the source culture. A "naturalised" or "domesticated" text adopts the norms and conventions of the target language and culture, and harnesses these norms to replace any trace of foreignness in the translated text. African writers such as Adichie maintain a sense of African culture in the English text by using the colonizer's language in a unique way to enhance local colour. Domestication of such writing entails the loss of rhythm and oral networks that make the language unique to postcolonial African writing. On one hand, this is the case in some parts of *L'autre moitié du soleil*—as exemplified by the analysis in this paper. By erasing the linguistic and cultural foreignness of the source text, the unique features carried by its sentences are completely concealed. Traces of Igbo oral culture are assimilated into the linguistic system of the French target language, thus offering a different representation of the source language and culture than that found in the original text. According to Berman, such a translation "winds up ridiculing the original" (294), and runs the risks of failing to serve as a means and a product of intercultural communication. On the other hand, given that one of the most obvious ways to foreignize a translation is to leave in foreign language in the translated text, De Pracontal's preservation of the vernacular in *L'autre moitié du soleil* is a significant act that acknowledges the postcolonial author's appropriation of the English language as well as preservation of African experience by means of vernacular phrasing. Given these instances of domestication and foreignization, it is clear that the translator of Adichie's text sought a variety of strategies to produce a text that is readable, understandable, and familiar to a French audience without completely deracinating the source culture of the author. Such an endeavour to maintain balance between the source and target texts foregrounds Bandia's suggestions that a translated text should be neither completely domesticated nor completely foreignized, as "the target culture is supposed to be receptive of the source culture and the receiving culture is supposed to mark its presence in the text" (*Translation as Reparation* 147).

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