

## **Translation, Principles and Application in Theatre and Media Studies.**

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### **Abstract**

Theoretically, the paper discusses the principle and practice in translation as broadly applicable to theatre and media studies. It characterises translation as one of the literary triplets to which also belong adaptation and transposition; each a phenomenon of art as imitation, capable of extending its frontiers of knowledge through processes of recycling of an existing original source text to a target text, also capable of ideally observing a good measure of literary fidelity; in respect of its original source text, diachronically and synchronically, with all its semiological essences. Thus the paper discusses, among other subtiles in focus, the essence of its message, a history of translation as encapsulated from the renaissance to postmodernism, emphatic on African experience in translation, perspectives on translation, principles and application. It dwells on faithfulness in translation with appropriate examples vis-à-vis salient elements of subversive translation; translation as conditioned by socio-cultural milieux and related concepts in the process of recycling, cloning and updating of historical, metaphysical and philosophical circumstances and constructs. Like adaptation and transposition, it is an aspect of irreducible and inalienable mythos, in all its literary essence. In this regard, it is a transcultural, intercultural and intracultural phenomenon, with coordinate interlingual, translingual and intralingual paradigms, promotional to civilization, growth and enrichment of multiculturalism. Translations have afforded generation after generation opportunities to share in the rich ideas, ideals, discoveries, inventions and theories of iconic figures like Christ, Aristotle, Plato, Galileo and Kopernicus etc; enriching humanity immeasurably, timelessly and pricelessly.

### **Introduction**

Arguably, translation, as a literary expression, is a phenomenon of unidentical triplets, the other brothers or sisters of who are adaptation and transposition with equally unidentical or varied artistic and aesthetic “DNA” (Deoryibo nucleic acid) radicals as their characteristic dynamics. An irreducible common denominator among the three, as artistic concept, is that, they are, in Aristotelian term, act of imitation or irreconcilably mimetic in nature or aesthetic construct. As modes of imitation, therefore, each of them can be transmitted or communicated through the medium or generic subject of comedy, tragedy, tragicomedy, among other artistic forms, as articulated in (Butcher 1956: 3ff). In this regard, translation is an act or art of expressing or communicating meaning, idea or information in another language faithfully or almost faithfully, as rendered in the original language, without distortion of the coordinate semantic, syntactic and other semiotic elements of the original.

Phenomenally, like adaptation and transposition, translation is an exercise in recycling, reviving or reactivation or, even, cloning of an original work of art into another language or form in which its communication ingredients can be equally adequately transferred, so as to make the work available, accessible and culturally consumable by another culture, which it presumably enriches through appropriate information and education through entertainments. Translation is an intrinsically interpretative phenomenon, in which the target culture is afforded a medium to share in the form, content and meanings or ideas contained in the original or source culture; linguistically, semiologically and ideationally, in all senses of the concept.

It may be worthwhile to state here briefly why translation, like adaptation and transposition are most vital, not only as interpretive or Hermeneutic, heuristic and pedagogical necessity, but perhaps more so as a recreative, recycling cloning and reformative art form. It is a medium targeted at regeneration, reproduction, repropagation as aesthetic and artistic acculturative imperative towards re-energizing and re-engineering emotional and psychic well-being of other cultures so targeted as immediate or remote beneficiaries. It is generally an uplifting and enriching construct if effectively consummated. In this regard, translation meaningfully effected, can help not only to regenerate recyclable aspects of varied human race, interchangeably and intra-changeably, but also contribute to perpetuate them. It can build viable bridges of understanding and peaceful coexistence among cultures so implicated. It can help to reduce or collapse walls of intercultural conflicts, occasioned by mutual suspicion, hatred and ignorance that, in turns, give vent to intolerance rather than live and let live. In this ever-increasingly globalised world, which is by implication assuming ever-shrinking space to small village dimensions, thanks to the dynamics of information and communication technologies: satellites, cables, fibre optics, digitalization, among other aspects of the information superhighways, and the revolution thereof. There is hardly any better alternative to spreading the world's family experiences in varied forms yet available. The ever-exciting and energizing dynamics of communication convergence can be well-enriched by the proper packaging of translation materials to potential consumers through the vehicles of theatrical stage productions and reproductions via the mass media of radio and television as legendary electronic media, cinematic or movie or filmic screens as celluloid medium vis-à-vis their videomatic alternatives through the ever-improving video cameras. Internet has become state-of-the-art avenues through which powerful ideas can be so comfortably and affordably disseminated. The global system of telecommunication (GSM) handsets are currently in the market to facilitate further dissemination of the products of research or constructs such as the products of meaningful translations for ever-ready patrons or consumers via these devices.

### ***The Media as Messages***

The main purpose of this essay is therefore to posit that translation of world masterpieces, famous works, in the forms of good plays, novels, ballads, poetry, musicals among other artistic or aesthetic writings; classic, romantic, medieval, renaissance, modern or post modern, can be a very worthwhile recreative endeavours capable of stimulating and recreative thinking and ideas, also capable of empowering

and enriching the highly interconnected world families meaningfully. In other words, our effort here is geared towards articulating the essence of translation, principles and application as a recreative art suitable for dissemination through theatrical stage, media screens or tubes as well as for studies in closets. Arguing that translation revives and invigorates or reinvigorates literature, (George Steiner 1975:30ff) asserts that, "Literature, whose genius stems from what Eluard called 'L dur désir de durer', has no chance of life outside constant translation within its own language." He states that art dies when man loses or ignores the conventions by which it can be read, by which its semantic statement can be carried or translated into our own idioms. In this regard, he asserts that those who have instructed later ages how to reread the Baroque, for instance or the classic, Renaissance or modern sensibilities have extended the backward reach of our senses. He continues persuasively,

In short, the existence of art and literature, the reality of felt history in a community, depend on a never-ending, though very often unconscious, act of internal translation. It is no overstatement to say that we possess civilization because we have learnt to translate out of time.

Unarguably, translation as a trans-cultural and intercultural construct, can be through inter-lingual or intra-lingual paradigms, in which it promotes civilization, growth of ideas that enrich target cultures, multivalently empowered in all senses of the word. The most influential book that was God-inspired and written more than three thousand five hundred (3,500) years ago, and subjected to no less than 3,000 languages in translation, world-wide, has been described as follows (Fireliner International, undated and unpaginated):

There is a book that has sold more copies than any other book written – the quantity is unknown to any publisher. It was the first book printed with movable metal type (on the Gutenberg Press Sometime before 1456) and today, 3500, years after the first portion was written, it is still the focal point of much controversy. This book is the Bible...

Unarguably, translations among other multifacetedly empowering aspects of the Bible in terms of the out-spring of ideas is its legendary animation of electronic; radio and television evangelism around the world, pioneered influentially by Reverend Billy Graham with innumerable copy cats and other emulators, spreading morally and spiritually charged messages to all the nooks and crannies of the theatre and media-connected global village of the world. Effective adaptations of Biblical stories, such as Mel Gibbs' *The Passion of the Christ* (2005), have enriched movie box-office worldwide, and continue to do so.

According to scientist Henry Morris, "The Bible provides a perfectly sound basis for understanding the physical process; it serves well as a textbook on science with which we can explain all the data on science and history." Quoted (by Fireliner

International, undated, unpaginated). Asserting that courtesy of the numerous translations of the Bible, its accessibility and penetrability, it can now be known that, “the essential elements in the astronomical and Biblical accounts are the same”, the document enumerates areas of knowledge to include modern astronomy in terms of the number of stars in the firmament, the hydrological cycles explaining the distribution of water in earth’s surface as well as Galileo’s discovery that air has weight etc.

### ***First Drama Translator***

In the dramatic and theatrical dimension, (Margarete Bieber 1971: 148 – 9) recorded that “The crude forms of entertainment were replaced in the second half of the third century B. C. by translations and adaptations of Greek tragedies and comedies.” (Bieber 148) recorded the following information which deserves to be quoted elaborately:

From the wealthy and theatre-loving Greek city of Tarentum which was taken by the Romans in 272 B.C., Livius Andronicus came as a child to Rome. He became slave and later a freedman and tutor in the house of a certain Livius. Having command of both Greek and Latin, he became the first translator in the world Literature. From 240 B.C to 207 B.C. he translated into Latin the tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides as well as Greek new comedies.

Interestingly, as Bieber also recounts, the first presentation of such a translated Greek tragedy and comedy was instituted by Livius Andronicus in the year 240 B.C. on the occasion of the Ludi Romani. Presentationally, beginning in 240 B.C. the first tragedies and comedies brought to Rome as translations and adaptations from the Greek were therefore presented on temporary wooden stages (Bieber: 167). Historically also, Bieber records, Sophocles Oedipus the King was performed in an original Italian translation at the occasion of the opening of the Treatro Olimpico in 1585 A.D. These are just an infinitesimally few examples of when, what, how and why morally, spiritually, emotionally and psychologically uplifting and ideas-stimulating or empowering God-inspired books, tragedies of Aeschulus, Sophocles, Euripides and Seneca, and the comedies of Aristophanes, Menander, Terence and Plautus among other texts have been transmitted from generation to generation, century to century through translation dynamics to generations born and yet-unborn. Just as the Bible in original Hebrews and other languages have been universalized through dynamic translations, so have the extant tragedies and comedies as well as other dramatic texts, from medieval through the Renaissance etcetera. Equally so have generations after generations been enriched, intellectually, through the dramatic theories of Aristotle, and Plato among others.

### ***Universal Man***

Reputably, Shakespeare’s sources of his numerous plays are derived from Plutarch, Holinshed and Italian tales which he personalized as his own, while remaining

tolerably faithful to the plots. On the other hand, he endows the stories with his own interpretation, as he imbues his characters with his own conception. In the same mode, he imbues them with global – local synthesis. (Harold Goddard 1970:3) writes:

And what life, he struck into them doing so! His Greeks and Romans, his Britons and Italians, all became, in one sense, Elizabethan Englishmen, and in another, what for lack of a Better term, we can only call “Universal Man.”

Remarkably, Shakespeare’s themes, plot treatments and characterization as reflected in his numerous plays, notably, such as *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Caesar*; to name just a few, each epitomizes a universal man; Occidental, Oriental or African, embattled and embroiled in a crisis forced on him by circumstances beyond his human control, arguably exacerbated, like Oedipus, by his own personal hubris, hamartia or other flaws in his personality.

### **Modern Examples**

Other very notable theatrical or dramatic works, original theories or plays written in other languages that have benefited by the creative or recreative exercise of translation include Bertolt Brecht’s numerous plays such as *Galileo*, *The Threepenny Opera*, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *The Goodwoman of Setzuan* among others, all plays, collected in nine volumes, were originally written in German and later translated famously by Eric Bentley and Desmond Versey among others. Among Brecht’s notable theories that have benefited from recreative translations are *The MessingKauf Dialogue* (1963) Brecht on *Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic* (1978) were all translated by John Willett. His theory of Scientific theatre, titled *The Short Organum for the Theatre* is in many ways Marxistic and anti-Aristotelian, through and through, in its modernist format, foreshadowing post-modernism in most respects. Also quite influential in its revolutionary and seminal thrust is Antonin Artaud’s *The Theatre and Its Double* (1958) translated from French by Mary Caroline Richards, Sartre on Theatre by Jean-Paul Sartre and translated also from the French by Frank Jelinek. *The Myth of Sisyplus and Other Essays* (1955) by Albert Camus among other works of his like *The Rebel* which have all stimulated the Theatre of the Absurd and other radical dramas and theatre were also translated from the French, the former by Justin O’Brien. Importantly, also, legendary tracts or treatises such as Niccolo Machiavelli’s *The Prince* (1995) translated by George Bull as well as Stanislavsky on *The Arts of the Stage* (1961) have also in varied ways, influenced character delineations in dramatic writings for the stage and screens; *The Prince*, as evidenced, among other aspects, is attributed by political and business leaders who claim to imbibe the ends justifying the means characterization and behaviours of leadership common in our days. So have modern stage and staging been vastly influenced by the so-called Stanislavskian as opposite of the Brechtian concepts which are anti-Aristotelian. Similarly, Homer’s *Odyssey* and *The Iliad*, “the world’s greatest adventure story” and “the world’s greatest war

novel”, as they have been respectively characterized as translated by W. H. D. Rouse have been very impressive in their classic and modern constructs. There is no doubt that these as well as Ovid’s the metamorphosis, a collection of legends and myths, as translated into vital poetry can be subtly adapted into dramatic construct that can be instructively recreated into screens for wider distribution, or dissemination for exciting consumption towards psycho-social and other upliftments. We can still go on and on to enumerate and discuss influential translations for the stage and mass media. Examples abound of the plays of Anthon Chekhov from Russian to English, Henrik Ibsen’s feministic plays from the Norwegian language, Pirandello’s from the Italian, Moliere’s from the French as well as those of Samuel Beckett, Jean Genet or those of Ionesco among others, that have enjoyed considerable patronage through translations into English in particular. There is hardly any doubt that the theatrical stages, cinematic or movie screens, in motion pictures theatre and electronic media, have in one way or another benefited, world-wide, significantly, using their distinctive productions styling for various theatrical experiences.

### ***African Experience in Translation***

There is hardly any doubt that African experience in translations of literary texts from their original source texts in English, French and any other target texts or vice versa has become quite considerable, though locating or accessing such texts is most of the time very difficult. Victor (O. Aire 2002:60) states this frustration succinctly when he says, among other facts that: “For years, only two articles could, to my knowledge, be found on translation in African literature...,” quoting epigraphically, Esaias Tegner’s assertion, translated from the French that, “Good translations, like beautiful wives are not always the most faithful”, (Aire 43) aptly justifies the strong need for translations in African literature as follows:

... it can easily be asserted that, on the whole, translators do a lot more good than harm. In the particular case of African literature, one cannot overlook the immense contribution of translators in mitigating the negative effects of an unsavoury colonial legacy, namely the geographical balkanization of Africa which resulted in a Babel of foreign tongues.

(Philip Noss 1987:214ff) underscores the above imperative, when writing on translation and the African oral tale, he asserts that “one of the prime reasons for translating African oral literature was therefore to make it available in some way, even to an audience that would otherwise not be able to enjoy it.” He adds, among other aspects, that “translation allows the reader access to what he would not otherwise be able to reach.”

Noss concludes that the legacy of source material which belongs to a people also lives through individuals to whom the new material target gives credit for their generosity in sharing their own treasure, not only with their own community, but also with the larger world community which may be able to know it and appreciate it only through translation. It goes without saying that the need to spread such products

through extensive repackaging, distribution and transmission using the varied mass media, including stage productions for mass consumption can hardly be over emphasized.

At this juncture, it is worthwhile to review or discuss, briefly, a few examples of the innumerable, heuristic, hermeneutic and pedagogical African experience in translation from the sources and studies available to us. Victor Aire, in his study of the translation of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (Re Monde S'effondre) by Michael Ligny and *A Man of the People* (Le Démagogue) by A. Diop as well as that of *The Arrow of God* (La Flèche de Dieu) by Irène Assiba d'Almeida and Olga Mahouge Simpson respectively, has presented very incisive and elucidative evaluations of such experience worthy of review. Asking if any one has the right to judge the result of a translator's arduous task, what criteria such a critic should use; in other words, what should be the qualities of a good translation? he attempts to answer the above question by quoting Jacques Flamand, who has postulated that an acceptable good translation must aim at semantic, expressive and cultural equivalence, as he must recognize the linguistic registers of the source text vis-à-vis the type of target readers envisaged and the effect aimed at producing on them. Most of such criteria, he asserts, can apply almost universally to all translations. He elaborates:

... a good translation should be accurate, authentic and pleasant to read. This last criterion, which touches implicitly on style, does not always depend solely on the competence or knowledgeability of the translator but also on the quality of his source text, which can be poorly crafted, illogical or inconsistent in tone or register (44).

Asserting that Ligny's translation of *Things Fall Apart* appears more successful than Diop's translation of *A Man of the People*, he suggests that the qualitative difference is a reflection of the nature of the two source texts. Commending the French translation, Aire evaluates the merits and demerits of the translation, respectively to include better elucidation of a point than the author did or that the translator's target text remedies some of the weaknesses of the source text, whereas the demerits include some outright mistranslations, omissions, additions, alterations and the use of wrong registers; examples of which he cites copiously. For instance, he suggests that some mistranslations appear to be due either to inadequate familiarity with the cultural background or mere contextual misinterpretation. On the contrary, in evaluating the Senegalese Diop's translation of *A Man of the People*, under the rubrics of felicities and weaknesses, Aire commends the translator for avoiding the literal translation of certain figurative expressions, while still presenting certain things colourfully, departing from the original where the syntax appeared faulty as well as elucidating some ambiguous instances in the source text.

All told, Aire concludes, here, roundly by appealing to those who dare to tread on the treacherous terrain of translation to be a bit more cautious and, as much as possible, to involve the authors or other colleagues in their ventures (59).

On a critical appraisal of the French translation of Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*

(62), Aire, again prefaces his evaluation with an epigraphic question: “Is it better to be elegantly unfaithful or awkwardly faithful?” Quoting Georg Borrow’s remark that “Translation is at best an echo”, Aire postulates that “a perfect high fidelity translation is impossible, that the passage from a source language text to a target language text must necessarily involve; no matter how minimal a certain semantic or stylistic loss;” he asserts, “until computer age can usher in the era of impeccable ‘processed’ translations, such then is the price that one must pay to have access to a work created in an unfamiliar language.” He elaborates:

... it is not too much of a price to pay for the discovery of a whole new vista on life; it is a paltry sacrifice to make in return for the opportunity to share another’s dreams, apprehensions and exaltations and exaltations. It is a price well worth paying for a French speaker who, thanks to translation, can read Chinua Achebe’s fiction.

Aire concludes, here, that it is necessary to spur translators to continuously give their best by regularly evaluating the result of the efforts. As Aire persuasively asserts, “Anyone who has ever had to translate a passage from one language into another would readily acknowledge, it is not often easy to attain corresponding equivalences. Since some of these really do not exist, according to him, it would become, often, demanding that a skilful translator must adopt glossing, evasive descriptions or outright circumlocution. It is in the light of such evaluations that the weight of the good services provided by translation must be juxtaposed with perhaps the negative aspects thereof to rationalize that, it is better to be awkwardly faithful than elegantly unfaithful.” (77)

It is significant to remark here that a number of Achebe’s novels or fictions has empirical historical backgrounds and that quite a number of them has enjoyed numerous translations into many oriental and other language target texts for heuristic and pedagogical reasons. Even though we cannot now access the précised texts of these for confirmation, *Things Fall Apart*, particularly, has also enjoyed stage and electronic media renderings or productions that have run on Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) for long in the past. Continuous reproductions, improvements on, and reruns of these existing versions in their original source texts and target texts, in adaptations, would continue to be ever enjoyed and useful for generations born and future, adopting and using the ever-improving and ever-expanding frontiers of the new mass media and communication convergence.

### **The Multiplier Effects of Good Translations**

By the term good translations here is meant any translation in which the target text is a faithful reflection of its source text. It does not mean a perfect reflection of its original, but a good reflection in the sense of a faithful rather than absolute transfer of relevant elements of the source text such as plot, theme, language, characterization and other adequate cultural equivalences that guarantee learning – entertainment, dramatic or theatrical piece or novel or poem capable of being adapted for stage and varied mass



media screens. We shall dwell more elaborately on fidelity of translation later. It is remarkable to note that African experience in translation attracts considerable attention because of the worthy multiplier effects of its varied target texts. Evaluations of a few such available texts in the forms of plays, theoretical and critical exposes, as examples worthy of attention will be focused here. We have earlier discussed the worthy transferability of a number of Achebe's novels, such as *Things Fall Apart* that have enjoyed hilarious stage and screen productions in the past, and deserves to be improved on and reproduced; for the now and future generations of theatrical stage and screen patrons.

### ***Transfer of High Culture***

In this regard, Wole Soyinka's worthy examples of such translations experience as well as those of Femi Osofisan and Ola Rotimi, among others, can be briefly evaluated here for the deep interpretative, pedagogical levels of meanings and inculcation of transfer of high African cultures. The following are particularly notable. Soyinka's free translation of D. O. Fagunwa's novel, *Ogboju Ode Ninu, Igbo Irunmale*, into the target text, titled *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons* (1968) has created very productive multiplier effects. *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons* was adapted by Wale Ogunyemi into a hilarious stage play titled *Langbodo* (1974) and directed by Dexter Lyndersay for both the National Festival of Arts and Culture (1974) and reproduced for the World Black Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in 1977, with considerable national and international acclaims. Apart from the theme of the "quest for lasting happiness and peace of mind" vis-à-vis "the hazards of that quest" belonging to all mankind, as packaged in the translation, Soyinka's comment in the translator's note (pages 3 – 4), underlines his relative fidelity to the novel:

In what I mentally refer to as the "enthusiastic" passage of his (Fagunwa's) writing the essence of Fagunwa is the fusion of sound and action. To preserve the movement and fluidity of this association seems to be the best approach for keeping faith with the author's style and sensibility.

Ogunyemi's dramatization and Lyndersay's stage renditions, no doubt, lend *Langbodo* to ready transfer to mass media of radio and television with easy manipulations of the camera and microphones as the major interpretative intermediaries, for greater mass media meanings and message for humanity. Femi Osofisan's recent stage adaptation of "Ogboju Ode Ninu, Igbo Irunmale," in the same refrain of Soyinka's translation, as "A Forest of A Thousand Daemons," has enjoyed fresh hilarious stage productions presented in Ibadan, Lagos and Abuja. It has also been suggested for a number of other cities around Nigeria and possibly outside Nigeria.

Both theoretically and historically, Dapo Adelugba's translation of Bakary Traore's original French source text, titled, *Le Theatre Negro-Africain* (Presence Africaine, 1959) and *Les Tendances Actuelles dans le Theatre Africain* (1970) to *The Black African Theatre And Its Social Functions* (1972) has been very seminal in motivating theatre students and scholars since its appearance. Its tour de force expose of the

origins of “The Black African Theatre, The Black African Theatre in French, The Aesthetic Problem, The Sociological Problem, The Black Theatre Outside Africa,” vis-à-vis the conclusions, forecasting “The Future of the African Theatre,” along with its epilogue, stressing the “Current Trends in the African Theatre”, are highly stimulating and pedagogical. The contributions of this translation to the vibrancy of African theatre and drama in Africa as a whole, Anglophone and Francophone among others are immeasurable. Two comparative samplers from Adelugba’s evaluations would suffice our need here:

The first Chapter, ‘Origins of the Black African Theatre’, attempts to establish... similarities between the ancient Greek and traditional African theatres. It also draws attention to the eclectic quality of African theatre of which music and dance constitute active components.

The following comparative thrust is particularly directional in terms of modernity in the African cast of mind and orientation: “Ponty and Theatre Africain were attempts to bridge the gap between the folk theatre of oral tradition and the imported dramas of the Western World. African theatre of the sixties provides us with numerous examples of this kind of bridge.”

In Nigeria, Adelugba passionately articulates: “... The Stage has witnessed in the last decade a gradual moving away from the infatuation with European and American box office successes, which thrived in the fifties to a conscious building up of a national theatre. (pages ix – x)”

No doubt, such new directions continue to be improved upon to post modernist echoes, not only in stage directions and productions, continent-wide, especially in Nigeria, but perhaps much more so, with regards to the electronic media productions on television and radio, as well as on screen in increasing celluloid films of Ola Balogun and Sebene Ousmane among others like the videomatic productions of Fred Amata, Fred Ejiro etcetera. These are making increasingly edifying – entertainment waves among the Black at home and in the Diaspora, in particular, and the world at large, in the ever-shrinking global village, all courtesy of information revolution, explosion and communication convergence, narrowing the digital and Satellite divides, in the process.

Another landmark in translation from the French original source text to English target text, combining not only theoretical, historical and critical but also penetrating ideological perspectives is Femi Osofisan’s very erudite translation of Alain Ricard’s *Theatre and Nationalism: [Wole Soyinka and LeRoy Jones (Amiri Baraka): 1983]*. As summarized in the Blurp of the book, Theatre and Nationalism,

... is a study of two black nations on stage aimed at clarifying the ‘Black World’ in all its cultural manifestations, its history, its development. The same exigency of reflection manifests itself in a non-conformist pace while striving to bring out with precision the terms of a problem, the limits of a field of investigation and the courses for the future.

It is quite intimidating to summarize even the expansive content pages of *Theatre and Nationalism* in this space-shying evaluation. It is however worth our while to dare it as follows: Its inviting foreword, by Alain Ricard herself, is followed by Osofisan's own introduction in Chapter one titled, "Two Committed Writers", as a foretaste, stimulating readers, enthusing and enthraling them like the piedpipers of Hammalim, to dig deeper into it to the end, as encapsuled in the following review: Each of the eleven remaining chapters of the book contains a smorgasbord of appetite-whetting theoretical, critical, historical, comparative, biographical and ideological syntheses of ideas and information, communicated in a mind-blowing language and style. The five paragraphs of chapter two under the sub-title of "The critical myths", discuss Negritude, Neo-Africanity Black consciousness... African and Afro-American Studies and ... a comparative and sociological literature. Chapter Three, containing nine paragraphs and headed "Black American Theatre and American Theatre" treats the myth of the black past, an exemplary beginning, the first stereotypes, view in perspective, the Black Renaissance, (1917 – 1927), Political Theatre (1929 – 1941), Morality (1941 – 1959), Nationalism and Theatre, and the Problem of the Audience. Similarly, Chapter Four, titled "Yoruba Theatre and Nigerian Theatre" agglomerates Theatre and Theatricality, Egungun Festivals, Are ritual dramas theatre? Theatre and Urbanization, The birth of the Yoruba Opera, The role of the University, the concluding remarks. Chapter Five, titled "Linguistic Pluralism and theatrical Language" evaluates literature and cultural pluralism in Africa, Yoruba poetry in *A Dance of the Forests*, *The Road* and pidgin, The Blues people and their language: *The Slave*, Africanization and 'Blackening' of language: *The Slave Ship*, and Should albinos go and drown themselves? respectively. Continuing, Chapter Six, "Imaginary spaces" focuses on social realism and mythical Africa, The Folkloric realism: The Swamp Dwellers, Electricity and simultaneity: *the Strong Breed*, The Super-naturalism: *The Toilet*, Town and Countryside: *The Lion and the Jewel*, and Whites and Black. And Chapter Seven headed: "Satire and Epic" evaluates Heroes of oppressed peoples, Refusal of the tragic: A Dance of the Forests, The return of the tragic: Kongi's Harvest, the archetypal characters: Dutchman, the prototypes: *Homes on the Range*, *Police* and *The death of character*.

In the same vein, Chapter Eight chronicles "Religion and the literary creation", discussing in the process: Religion and national sentiment, the criticism of priests: *The Trials of Brother Jero*, Syncretism: *A Dance of the Forests*, A materialist mysticism: *the Road*, Religious alienation: *The Baptism*, Ritual Theatre: *Mad Heart*, Religious theatre: *Black Mass*, Note on LeRoy Jones and Yoruba Religion, The artist, prophet of the race: LeRoy Jones, and the Ontological pessimism of Wole Soyinka. Chapter Nine treats solely "Some remarks on nationalism".

Chapter Ten and Eleven intimately compares Wole Soyinka separately with LeRoy Jones, whose name has been Islamized to Imamu Amiri Baraka. On Wole Soyinka, the following topics have been closely discussed: The national literary production, Wole Soyinka and Yoruba culture, the role of history, Tribalism and nationalism. On Amiri Baraka, the author discusses Ambiguity of cultural nationalism, the 'modern', 'Black fire, culture' and counter culture, and culture and politics.

Finally, again, this stimulating translation tour de force concludes with thought-provoking and ideas-enriching conclusion, subtitled "Two Liberations", asserting

among other statements that, “Literature does not exist in the void, it is the work of men who are linked to one another by determined social structures. Comparative literature, like literary criticism simply must for its own sake ‘reincarnate’ art in the living flesh of society.”

Underscoring the very academic nature of Theatre and Nationalism... the target text like its source text, is enriched with extensive and challenging Bibliography, including works and criticisms by and on each of the playwrights, poets, critics and human-rights activists; in focus. The weight and range of the subject matters vis-à-vis the lodestone of ideas and the inspirational vents they could provide for interpretive and pedagogical interests embedded, amply justify the tedium implicit in the above evaluation of *Theatre and Nationalism* as profiled. It is also an attempt to underscore the translation tour de force and the Herculean task involved in the communication affects and effects of its French-to-English linguistic registers. It also underlines the bilingual skills and mastery of the two languages used by the translator. Its international usage and popularity among comparative theatre scholars and students adumbrate the apparent fidelity of the translation of the text. The manifest and potential multiplier effects of this target text can hardly be over emphasized. Though not easily empirically verifiable, it can be strongly argued that the multifaceted, powerful ideas with which *Theatre and Nationalism* is saturated have helped those who have benefited from them via research, pedagogies and other studies, especially in creative endeavours through enduring varied learning-entertainment media productions.

Translation and/or adaptation?: One can strongly argue that Ola Rotimi’s version of Sophocles’ Oedipus Rex titled *the Gods Are Not to Blame* has been brought to Nigerian, nay African target audiences through a skilful combination of the techniques of not only adaptation and transposition but those of translation. The overt Yorubanization nay Nigerianization, using the linguistic registers enriched with local idioms, proverbs, maxims, riddles and jokes, rhetorics; what Adelugba calls Yoruba English, flora and fauna, pidginization, ethical and moral dilemmas, among other sensibilities like characterization, rhythms of play, all have made the play a convincing adaptation – transposition – translation masterpiece. Rotimi’s adaptation uses serio-comic sensibilities to suit African tragic-comic orientation rather than retaining Sophocles pure tragic echoes more suitable to Greek tragic perception of reality. Using Yoruba operatic rhythms of play-making the play is particularly unique as a skilful unification of the literary triplets. It is also remarkable to note that Osofisan’s *Who’s Afriad of Solarin* is also an unique adaptation – translation. Borrowing the title from Edward Albee’s *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, Osofisan, as Lanrele Bamidele (1990) has remarked, uses the adaptive techniques in translating Nicholai Gogols’ *The Government Inspector*, 1985, itself an English rendering of a popular Russian source text. Another multiplier effect of Osofisan’s creative endeavour is his collaboration with a Yoruba literature scholar, Dotun Ogudeji, to again, adapt-translate *Who’s Afriad of Solarin* to another target text, titled “Yago Solarin Nbo.” It is an attempt that is probably aimed at spreading out like sharing an enriching culinary cuisine for the benefits of non-English-speaking Yoruba audience. It is most likely not for any “sentimental attachment to the idea of mother tongue being a holy tongue,” as Bamidele suggests. Arguably, Harry Iyorwuese Hagher’s rendering of Aristophanes’

*Lysistrata to Mulkin Mata* (1991), can be regarded as a radical attempt at translating, intimately localizing, a theme that reverberates with variedly Universal interests down the ages; from classical to postmodernism.

On the other hand, Samson (now Samsudeen) Amali's *Onugbo Mloko*, in the words of R. G. Armstrong (1972) is the author's own poetic and dramatic version of an Idoma traditional, ancestral story. The folktale also exists in Yala in Cross River State, with the title of Odigbo bal Oko Onenu (Odigbo and Oko his Brother), having similar theme and message conveyed in Amali's version. *Onugbo Mloko* is therefore a good example of a poetic drama that uses all the triple heritage techniques of adaptation – transposition-translation.

According to Armstrong, "Amali helped record the story at Otukpo in its original form, his brother, Oteikwu Amali transcribed the text and both of them worked hard on the translation." Armstrong's summary of the play is worthy of adoption here:

... Amali has exercised his poetic privilege in reinterpreting the story so as to relate it to certain themes of modern life and to adapt it to the needs of the stage. He chooses to endow the story with a good deal of local realism; he emphasizes the social setting of the story by the prominence which he gives to the inquest...

The story of *Onugbo Mloko*, like its equivalence in Yala, has their Biblical parallel in terms of timelessness and placelessness, as graphically portrayed in the story of Cain and Abel. Armstrong's conclusion is in tune with this comparison: "As a parable of the rivalry of brothers, the story has a significance that goes far beyond the immediacies of time and place." (Introduction: unpaginated, 1972). Amali's work like other local bilingual adaptation – translations such as *Oba Ko so*, a scintillating Opera by Duro Ladipo, *The Palm Wine Drinkard*, an opera adapted from Amos Tutuola's novel, *The Palm-wine Drinkard* adapted – translated by Kola Ogunmola as well as Obaluyeye, another opera by Wale Ogunyemi, all deserve improved, updated versions for ready mass media productions and reproductions; in modern or postmodernist fashions for the consuming benefits of local, regional and international audiences. These could each be repackaged for dissemination via the electronic, satellite, digital, stage and other performance media. Their transferable cultural dynamics, can in many ways, enrich many new audiences, especially the varied hues of Africans in the diaspora; no doubt, through realistic, allegorical and even anti-realistic portrayals on stage, film and videomatic productions, distributable through radio, television, internet and other media of communication.

All said, the main recurrent and endemic obstacles to a realization of multiplier-effect objectives have always been and would continue to be the paucity or total absence or epileptic funding of the arts that should engineer regularly well-targeted productions catering to varied audiences for holistic humanistic coexistence. We can go on and on. But I shall wind up on this aspect of our evaluation by a brief trip into one of my favourite dramatists from the Arabs world, Tewfik Al-Hakim.

### **The Root of Arabs Experience In Theatre**

I love Tewfik Al-Hakim's synergy of histrionic sensibilities, encapsulating the absurdist elements, learnt from Ionesco and Adamov, the irrational, the metaphysical and the existentialist, gleaned, perhaps, from Jean-Paul Sartre and Soren Kierkegaard, among others, and the criss-cross of the expressionist, a tacit influence of the German expressionism of Walter Sokel, and Georg Kaisa, among others. His world also manifestly portrays the surrealist, the dadaist and the Artaudian or Guillaume Apollinaire, Andre Breton and Antoni Artaud respectively. The skilful translations of his plays such as *The Tree Climber* (1966), *Fate of a Cockroach and Other Plays* etc., all by Denys Johnson – Davis, have provided the English literary world with the rich benefits of these stimulating and psycho-socially exhilarating experiences from the Arab world. On *The Tree Climber*; Denys Johnson – Davis writes:

*The Tree Climber* contains some nicely timed surprises, some wry humour and not a few implicit comments on life that has meaning for anyone living in the present time. Are not most of us, like the husband in *The Tree Climber*, vainly seeking, to our eventual disaster, the magic tree that will give us a different fruit in the seasons of the year? (the Frontispiece of *The Tree Climber*: 1966).

Responding to his own question as to “What has Tewfik Al-Hakim got to say to the non-Arab reader” in his plays? Johnson-Davis asserts that “the East is no more mysterious than the West, that we all face very much the same problems and react to them in very similar ways.” (vi).

As Johnson-Davis also asserts, Tewfik Al-Hakim's preoccupation with the themes of freedom, universal imperative is legendary. In *Fate of a Cockroach*, for instance, as Johnson-Davis reminds readers, “man's natural love of freedom, his refusal to despair in the face of adversity, are exemplified in the cockroach's strivings to climb out of the bath.” Concluding roundly, Johnson-Davis further elaborates:

Tewfik Al-Hakim's preoccupation with freedom can also be seen from the title of one his volumes of autobiography, *The Prison of Life*, in which he discusses the individual's inability to escape from the imprisonment imposed upon him by the circumstances of his birth, by the fact that he is the child of two particular parents who in turn were brought into the world with inherited characteristics (*Fate of a Cockroach and Other Plays*, page vii – viii.)

There is no doubt that the foundation of Arabs experience in drama and theatre was solidly laid by Tewfik Al-Hakims. As Johnson-Davis succinctly articulates, with his natural talent, wide reading in French, close study of the techniques of the Euro-American theatre, hitherto unknown in the classical Arabic literature, vis-à-vis his deep interests in the problems of language, especially in a culture noted for its spoken

language differing so much from written, Tewfik Al-Hekim gave the Egyptian drama and theatre the needed foundations of respectability that has transcended time and place (viii).

Arguably, Tewfik Al-Hakim must have prepared the minds of Egyptians and other Arabs to be so readily receptive to the literary endeavours of Naguib Mahfouz, the Egypt's greatest writer (novelist) and the first Egyptian Nobel Laureate for literature in 1988.

### ***Perspectives on translation, principles and application***

This rather late point of attack on this aspect of our essay is deliberate for logistics and suspense reasons. We have briefly defined what translation, as a literary concept is, earlier. It is appropriate to elaborate here, in applicable retrospect to the foregoing that translation, as (C. Hugh Holman 1972: 537) asserts, is "the rendering of a literary work originally produced in one language into another." "At one extreme of translation stands the literal rendering of the work into another language, word for word, without concern for the primary differences in Idiom and Imagery between the two languages." On the other hand, "at the other extreme, is the adaptation of the work into the other language." He elaborates that translation is an attempt to not only comprehend but also to communicate the spirit and meaning of the work, adapting same to the conventions and idioms of the language into which it is being transferred, striking a balance between the extremes of what Croce, in Holman's words, called "faithful ugliness or faithless beauty."

Bamidele (1990) calls the two kinds interlingual and intralingual, where the text is translated respectively from one language into another or from one language into the same language, perhaps, from one poetic shape into another.

George Steiner (1957: 250) agreeing with this model, asserts "that the world has carried out this practice "since the beginning of human history", adding that linguists continue to distinguish between a diachronic (vertical) and synchronic (horizontal) structure of language. Suggesting that if culture depends on the transmission of meaning across time, the German word "eubatrigen" would connote translation end of handing through narrative vis-à-vis the transfer of meaning in space, Steiner asserts that there is a centrifugal impulse in language. That is that "languages that extend over a large physical terrain will engender regional modes and dialectics." Reviewing M. J. and J. Derive and J. Thomas (1975), Philip Noss evaluates three versions of translation, namely the literal or word for word, intelligible and literary translations respectively. Continuing, he states that the literal seeks to put the reader in touch with the ideal version, underlying the ethnographic, the literary with the linguistic and the intelligible with the translational. He writes elaborately:

The literary version incorporates aspects of the oral performance that the translator feels lend meaning to the linear text, for example, gestures that might describe an object or character or action, voice modulation that might characterize action or other semiotic devices employed by the performer. Similar to Derive's literary translation is the

work of modern African writers who retell traditional tales in a second language for an international readership. (218)

Typical examples of such literary translation can be provided by Soyinka's *The Forests of a Thousand Daemons* or Amali's *Onugbo Mloko* or Amos Tutuola's *The Palm Wine Drinkard* rendered operatically by Kola Ogunmola, among other sources to target texts discussed earlier. A recurrent aspect of linguistic, form and content registers here is what can be called irreducible elements of the problems of translations from one language or medium or genre to another. This represents the finding of accurate or identical idioms or imageries or exact semantic equivalences. These problems can be particularly so with regard to translating novels or poetic narrative to theatrical or cinematic media.

However, suggesting that though the lines of division are not absolute in any sense, theoretically, there are four periods in the history of translation. The first period, he emphasizes extends from Cicero's 46 B.C.'s famous precept avoiding translation *Verbum pro Verbo* (word for word), Harace's reiteration of this formula in his *Ars Poetica* some twenty years later, down to Holderlin's enigmatic commentary on his own translations from Sophocles (1804), which followed 1530's arguments that included Ben Jonson's arguments on imitation, Pope on Homer and Dryden's elaborations on Horace, etcetera. Steiner suggests that "the main characteristic of the first period is that of immediate empirical focus." Similarly, the second stage is that of theory and hermeneutic inquiry. Here, the investigation of the need to grasp an oral or written speech vis-à-vis the attempt is to diagnose the same process in terms of model of meaning that was well articulate to give the subject of translation deep philosophical aspects. He calls this the age of philosophic-poetic theory of definition, albeit with now a historiography of translation, identified by 1946. The fourth stage is apparently merged with third. Here the approaches illustrated in *A Critical Symposium* (1961) are still manifestly characterized as logical, contrastive, semantic and comparative, leading on to a reversion to hermeneutic, almost metaphysical inquiries into translation and interpretation. He writes further, "... translation offers a critical ground on which to test the issues. Even more than in the 1950s, the study of the theory and practice of translation has become a point of contact between established and newly evolving disciplines."

Steiner further opines that the adage, familiar to Novalis and Humboldt, that all communication is translation, has taken up a more technical, philosophically grounded force (236 – 238).

### ***Fidelity of Translation***

Many theorists, critics and other scholars seem to be unanimous that translation is an ashy model or equivalent of the original idea, content form, concept or medium; all in the sense that no matter how sublime, translation is just a shadow of its source; spoken, written, in movement or song. An Italian adage as stated by Aire regards the translator as "traitor", by referring to it as: "traduttore, traditore", "translator, a traitor." Borrow, as we discussed earlier sees it as "at best an echo."

It has been asserted that there can be no true symmetry, no adequate mirroring



between two different semantic systems; formally and pragmatically. Suggesting that the vital energies, the luminosity and pressure of the original text have not only been diminished by translation; they have been made tawdry, Steiner (240ff) quotes Nabokov's poem "on Translation", thus to buttress his argument:

What is translation? On a platter  
A poet's pale and glaring head,  
A parrot's screech, a monkey's chatter,  
And profanation of the head.

Steiner further quotes Dante's *Convivio* in translation, meaning that "Nothing fully expressive, nothing which the muses have touched can be carried into another tongue without losing its savour and harmony." He concludes, here, roundly that "Ash is no translation of fire." It can however be argued that translation, an inseparable aspect of interpretation, is a creative or recreative endeavour; constructive and deconstructive phenomenology, can render a target text that turns out to be much better than its source text in many ways. Aire (63) supports this argument when he opines that there are even instances where they (translators) have improved on the source language text and others where they have offered translations that are particularly remarkable for their originality." Rotimi's adaptation – translation of Sophocles *Odipus Rex* to *The Gods are Not to Blame*, Osofisan's adaptation – translation of Gogol's *The Government Inspector* to *Who's Africad of Solarin* and again Soyinka's *The Forests of a Thousand Daemons*, all of which can be easily readjusted for the mass media of cinematic and videomatic productions, are good examples of such renditions. It can never be over-emphasized that perfection in translation is an absurd concept. No human or material product can be perfect. Hardly can there be a perfection of even identical materials, object or man. Reiteratingly, there can never be a total facsimile of ideas, semantics or syntax, semiologically. There must always be minute or magnified differences.

In the words of Steiner (250), "To dismiss the validity of translation because it is not always possible or never perfect is absurd." In all, as far as fidelity of representation or presentation is concerned, translation is analogical to the concept that no one can jump into the same volume of water in a river more than once, nor any one dance step or movement in acting be effected exactly more than once. Paraphrasing Croche's thesis, Steiner (244) states the same concept aptly, but differently, when he says: "To translate is to compound unrepeatability at second and third hand", because he says, "strictly considered, no statement is completely repeatable..."

### ***Subversive Translation***

What is more, a translator's aims, intentions, objectives or purpose may be vastly or completely different from those of the original author of a literary text. In this regard, the translator may not care at all about fidelity in his recreative or mimetic endeavour. His aims may be targeted toward deconstruction not reconstruction. He may achieve such aims through resorting to the medium of parodying, burlesquing, satirizing or travesty aspects, parts of or the whole works for subversive reasons. In this instance, what a critic may evaluate is the effectiveness or originality derivable

from such efforts vis-à-vis, how the cause of arts, aesthetics and humanity has been advanced or otherwise, communication-wise. Translation as a literary or artistic and aesthetic exercise can be described as good without necessarily being slavishly faithful to its original source text. What may matter in this respect is arguably the dramatic, theatrical and aesthetic experience it may engender or provoke as a recreative endeavour, and the possible alternative world of ideas or thoughts such experience may convoke, especially if parodistically effected as a measure of countering jaded ideas or culture.

### ***Conclusion***

Interpretation and reiteration of ideas to suit the winds of change conditioned by cultural milieux and related concepts is a constant element of updating and recycling of historical, metaphysical and philosophical circumstances and constructs. Translation like its other two artistic triplets, adaptation and transposition, is an aspect of this mythos that fits snugly into this literary essence.

Translation as a trans-cultural, inter-cultural and intra-cultural experience with its inter-lingual and intra-lingual paradigms promotes civilization, growth and enrichment of other cultures. Steiner (30 – 31) expresses it, perhaps, more pointedly when he says: "... the existence of art and literature, the reality of felt history in a community, depend on a never-ending, though very often unconscious, act of internal translation. It is no over-statement to say that we possess civilization because we have learnt to translate out of time."

Unarguably, translations of classical materials such as dramas, theories and criticisms with their wealth of ideas; wisdom, moral and ethical essences vis-à-vis their lodestone of knowledge expose the succeeding generations to their priceless experiences, philosophies of life and other co-existential imperatives. Paraphrasing Symonds, Steiner (246) asserts, "... the whole of Rome had become a factory of translations from Greek to Latin. The justification was proudly self-evident. Only translation could ensure that modern man would not be deprived of the wisdom and profit of the past."

Similarly, the Platonic, Aristotelian, Galileo's, Ptolemaic and Kopernican lodestone of theories, discoveries, inventions etcetera, were all transmitted through various translations to have the generations born and yet-to-be-born exposed to their invaluable concepts, rationalizations and energizing ideas. This is what Steiner (247 – 8) means when he asserts that "Translation provided the energies of Renaissance and Baroque with an indispensable if largely fictive re-insurance", and also that "from translation all science had its off-spring."

All in all, summarily, from Sophocles to Shakespeare, Aristotle to Brecht, Shaw to Soyinka and Osofisan, among other playwrights, theorists and critics, as well as historians and philosophers or linguists, translation, as a mimetic and interpretative endeavour, has contributed significantly to expanding the frontiers of ideas and knowledge through learning across disciplines, times and space. Its future is, unquestionably, still boundless.

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