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SOMMAIRE

atividade de ensino de pla com base de letramento como prática social.....1-16

Arnel Patricia Dally JOHOULI

Éléments linguistiques du discours direct dans le récit dialogué : cas du roman de jeunesse.....17-28

Koua mé Emmanuel KOFFI

étude de la diversité des pratiques linguistiques d'étudiants de l'UFR LLC de l'Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny.....29-58

DION Marie -Ange Floriane

Regard sur les pratiques enseignantes des maitres dans le déroulé des cours de français dans les écoles primaires de Côte d'Ivoire.....46-59

TANO H Djemvié Hermann Philippe

Meaning Gaps And The Task Of Translating Poetry: Notes on Lucille Clifton's Translation of "Afrique" By David Diop.....60-72

Ahmadou Siendou KONATÉ

On the Position of Nominative Subjects in Contemporary in english..... 73-83

Joseph Y. BOGNY & Ali K. AMADOU

Étude taxinomique Ou taxonomique des Adjectifs..... 84-101

GNAMIAN Bi Eric Arnaud & GOORE BI Lorou André-Marie

La transmutation des classes grammaticales comme forme de transgression : le cas du nom, du verbe et de l'adjectif qualificatif dans *Les sofàs suivi de l'œil* de Bernard Zadi Zaourou.....102-111

Séraphin KOUAKOU Konan

Convergence et divergence entre trois manuels scolaires de français de CP1 utilisés à l'école primaire de Côte d'Ivoire du début des années 80 à nos jours : analyses et conséquences didactiques.....112-126

KOUADIO Konan Arsène

Analyse métaopératoire des marqueurs discursifs i mean et meaning.....127-144

KONDRO Kouakou Yannick

L'expressivité dans la poésie chantée N'dolo à travers les formes rythmiques réitératives : cas du rythme immédiat et du rythme profond.....145-162

KROUWA Jean De Dieu & KOUAKOU Konan Constant Guy

The attitude, culture and identity of the Nouchi.....163-177

Jean-Claude DODO

l'Anglais et le sentiment de satisfaction face à l'emploi : cas des travailleurs abidjanais prestataires de services.....178-192

KOUANDE Bassa Gerard

Approche linguistique de la Préservation de la biodiversité animale à travers trois langues Niger Congo.....193-205

KOUAKOU N'guessan Gwladys & KROUWA Stéphanie Tanoa

Structure de la coordination conjonctive des DP en mó dzúkrù.....206-229

KPAMI Boni Carlos Mozer & AKPOUÉ K. Josué

MEANING GAPS AND THE TASK OF TRANSLATING POETRY: NOTES ON LUCILLE CLIFTON'S TRANSLATION OF "AFRIQUE" BY DAVID DIOP

AHMADOU SIENDOU KONATÉ

Université Felix Houphouët-Boigny

siendouk@gmail.com

Abstract

Translation is the reproducing of the meaning of the source language-culture through the closest natural equivalent, says Eugene Nida. Beyond the reproduction of the equivalent, some other detail, and not the least, must be factored in the process of translation. This is all the truer when it comes to translating poetry. If prose may be translated without absolute regard to the form, the same does not hold for poetry. The task of translator requires that the receiving end of the process of translating take advantage of the aesthetics enjoyed in the source language. When translating so essential a poem in African literature of French expression, Lucille Clifton, an African-American poetess and translator, seemed to not having been able to escape this snare. There are some meaning gaps in her translation of David Diop's "Afrique". This can be seen in instances where some area-specific terms in Sub-Saharan Africa used in the original. This note on translation seeks to lay bare the lacunas and attempts to fill them up with some suggestions.

Key words: *Diop, translation, Africa, gaps, poetry, language, culture*

Résumé

Selon Eugène Nida, traduire consiste à reproduire par le moyen d'un équivalent naturel le plus proche le sens du message de la langue originale dans la langue d'arrivée. Si la traduction de la prose se fait aussi aisément selon ce schéma, il n'en est pas ainsi pour la poésie. En effet, l'équivalence ici sous-entend une focalisation sur le contenu au détriment, pour ainsi dire, de la forme, or la poésie est une question de forme. Le lecteur d'un poème traduit doit pouvoir jouir de la beauté de ce poème au même titre que le lecteur dudit poème dans la langue-culture d'origine. Lorsque Lucille Clifton, poète et traductrice afro-américaine s'emploie à traduire « Afrique » ce poème légendaire de David Diop, des trous de sens restent béants, surtout lorsqu'il s'agit de certains termes fortement liés à l'espace de l'Afrique subsaharienne. Cette étude s'emploie à rembourrer ces trous et montrer des pistes de traductions de ce poème.

Mots clés : *Diop, traduction, Afrique, lacunes, poésie, langue, culture*

Introduction

Poetry has been an important tool in the literary movement of self-affirmation among African students in Paris prior to decolonization and independence. Poets who marked the literary struggle for self-owning include people like Senghor and his friends (Aimé Césaire, Léon Damas) of the French colonies in the Antilles. Yet, another breed of young African poets made remarkable inroads into committed and committing poetry. David Diop is one of them, if not one Africa's most immemorial poets because of his Africa poem that came out at a time when African people, like their counterparts in North America, sought to (re-)represent themselves as they were painted as heathen, savage and barbaric beings by Western philosophers and others thinkers laying the groundwork for what is known as the civilizing mission.

Every work emerges from a context without which understanding it become somewhat impossible despite claims of some formalist to the contrary. Poetry is an example to the point. In order to understand a poem with more political and ideological underpinnings than can be imagined (and especially when the poem does not obey classical versification standards), a formal(ist) reading becomes cheap and susceptible to lead astray. Imagine a French expert of poetry rather keen on reading with a French, Eurocentric and pretended apolitical lens, explaining David Diop. This contribution seeks to speak about the translation issues arising from the English translation of David Diop's celebrated and groundbreaking poem titled "Afrique", originally in the French language, but brought to the Anglophones through the English language and the 1974 translation of the Lucille Clifton of the USA.

I. Contextualizing Diop's poem

The poem was initially included in his collection of poems titled *Coup de Pilon* published by *Présence africaine* in 1956 in Paris, France. It emerged in the tradition of works by African artists seeking to reverse the table of laws edicted by Whites on Black people of African in both their precolonialist discourses and their colonial ideologies and practices. Diop's poem was part of a larger endeavor to unsettle colonialism. Like Leopold Senghor, Aimé Césaire and Leon Damas who are remembered as the revivers of African poetic aesthetics and actors of African renaissance, Diop sought to place Africa at the center of his poetic and political concerns. They all found necessary to reconnect with the lost roots by means of a protest of sorts which culminated in the negritude movement founded by Césaire, Senghor and Damas. According to Ibrahima Baba Kaké, Negritude cannot be disassociated from the Negro Renaissance whose theoretical groundwork was laid by

someone like Alain Locke in his celebrated “New Negro.”¹ Kake believes that “Il n’est donc pas superflu de souligner que la négritude à l’origine n’est qu’un débordement du mouvement américain ou si l’on préfère un rameau qui a fleuri ailleurs. Entre le tronc américain et le rejeton parisien, il y a bien entendu la médiation de la Renaissance haïtienne” [It is then right to stress that negritude was at the beginning an extension of the American movement, or if one prefers, an offshoot that yielded elsewhere. Between the American roots and the Parisian extension, there is of course the Haitian Renaissance] (Kake, 54).²

As much African intellectuals were influenced by their brothers in the Americas, so too at one point the history of their struggle against their dehumanization by Westerners, they came to find interest in one another’s intellectual implements of struggle. Diop’s “Afrique” was translated at a time when Black nationalism was on the rise and when Black integrationist movement was fading away, Martin Luther King and other Black leaders being assassinated. As a consequence, thereof, the way was open for extremism and national preference. The reappropriation of works like Frantz Fanon’s and others can reasonably be apprehended in that vein.

Diop’s poem speaks for itself; it is about longing for Africa that the poet has never known in reality, but a place he heard of through the words of mouth of his parents.

II. Of fidelity and intranslatability in poetry rendering

Is there this undoubted potential available to the translator of poetry to render textually, i.e., in the exact same way, the message and form thereof as translator usually

¹ It is clear that the same philosophy making the New Negro discourse viable and workable lurks behind the Negritude. For instance, Locke writes, “The Negro too [...] has idols of the tribe to smash. If on the one hand the white man has erred in making the Negro appear to be that which would excuse or extenuate his treatment of him, the Negro, in turn, has too often unnecessarily excused himself because of the way he has been treated. The intelligent Negro of today is resolved not to make discrimination an extenuation for his shortcomings in performance, individual or collective; he is trying to hold himself at par, neither inflated by sentimental allowances nor depreciated by current social discounts. For this he must know himself and be known for precisely what he is, and for that reason he welcomes the new scientific rather than the old sentimental interest” (Locke 1995 p. 25).

² Speaking of this intertextual relation between Africa and North America, Kake observes or reminds that “Les idées nationalistes et panafricaines lancées en Amérique dès la fin du XIX^e siècle seront [...] très vite assimilées par un petit cercle d’intellectuels africains résidant à Paris dont l’influence sera presque insignifiante en Afrique. Il faut attendre la fin de la Deuxième Guerre, pour voir les idées panafricaines et nationalistes se propager parmi les intellectuels francophones” [The nationalist and pan-Africanist ideas that originated in the US toward the end of the 19th century were integrated by a small group of African intellectuals living in Paris. These African intellectuals would barely have an impact on Africa. These ideas became disseminated among Francophone intellectuals at the end of World War II] (Kake, 1979 p. 65).

would aspire to do when dealing with any literary and/or non-literary material? Can everything be translated without putting some twist of the translator's own on it?

To translate generally raises the question of fidelity, of adequacy between the source text and the target text-culture. Fidelity is part of wishful thinking in general. Because of the multiplicity of languages as well as the inherent conceptual difference, it is almost impossible to create some form of identical meaning between source text and target text. Translation, despite the above, is still done from time immemorial. If such is the case for non-literary texts, it is even more true for literary translation. Speaking of literary translation, Antoine Berman writes (2000, p.287):

Literary prose collects, reassembles, and intermingles the polylingual space of a community. It mobilizes and activates the totality of 'languages' that coexist in any language [...] Hence, from a *formal* point of view, the language-based cosmos that is prose, especially the novel, is characterized by a certain *shapelessness*, which results from the enormous brew of languages and linguistic systems that operate in the work. This is also characteristic of canonical works, *la grande prose* [...] Insofar as the novel is considered a lower form of literature than poetry, the deformations of translation are more accepted in prose, when they do not pass unperceived. For they operate on points that do not immediately reveal themselves.

Clearly, translating poetry is a way different from translating prose. Translating prose is easier than translating poetry.

Yet, Mona Baker (2000, p.244) tells us that "a translator cannot have, indeed should not have, a style of his or her own, the translator's task being simply to reproduce as closely as possible the style of the original". Can this be applied to poetry in translation? Whose style and aesthetics need to be upheld here, the author or the translator?

In literary translation, prose offers more liberalities to the translator. Here, the meaning of the message matters more than the way it has been said. In poetry, it is altogether different. In fact, poetry is a humongous task of its own in the sense that it is a compilation of words and feelings expressed in analogical images hiding and unraveling ideas that are at the same time feelings which L. Senghor (1990, p.395) calls "idées-sentiments" [ideas cum feelings]. Poetry is, according to Leopold Senghor (1990, p.394), "des 'paroles plaisantes au cœur et à l'oreille. Ce ne sont pas des idées, pas même des sentiments comme tels ; c'est 'le bien dire' parce que le dire accordée au cœur est consonant à l'oreille" [Spoken words that are soothing for the heart and the ears. These are neither words, nor feelings as such. They are rather about saying well because that which is said for the heart is also meant for the ears]. These new and important elements provided by one of Africa's greatest poetic minds bring into the talk the fact that to translate poetry. How to translate feelings which pertain to the realm of the heart and sounds to the preserve of the sole ears?

Is poetry impermeable to translation because of its very nature that is individual-specific in the sense that the poet pumps into the words his feelings as per the Senghorian understanding in order for them to only mean what the poet intended them to. This raises the question of untranslatability of poetry. Oséké-Dépré writes (1999, p.127), “l’intraduisibilité de la poésie – et son corollaire, la recreation poétique – met en évidence l’essence du fait littéraire. Qu’est-ce qui est intraduisible, en effet, sinon ce qui fonde la littérature, soit le signe poétique ?” [Untranslatability of poetry (with of course its attending poetic recreation) places some emphasis on the very essence of literature. That which is deemed untranslatable is the foundation of literariness or the poetic sign]. Untranslatability, or simply put the impossibility to translate poetry into another language-culture without saying something different from the original, cannot deflect the translator from doing his/her job. The translator make focus on the general meaning of the poem (which Ladmiral will call the essential) in opposition to the style and aesthetics that are language-specific and will be a herculean task of sorts should the translator err into reproducing with exactness the very and same style and aesthetics in the target culture.

According to Jean-René Ladmiral (1979, p.18-19) “Le métier de traducteur consiste à choisir le moindre mal; il doit distinguer ce qui est essentiel de ce qui est accessoire” [the translator’s task consists in choosing the least evil; he/she must be able to tell what is essential from what is not]. The linguistic and aesthetical differences make poetic translation a Herculean task of sorts.

Thus, Rose-Marie Fournier-Guillemette (2011, p.81) states, “Pourtant, à la réflexion, le concept de fidélité est stérile, puisqu’il se heurte à l’impossibilité de traduire à la fois le fond et la forme du texte littéraire ” [Yet, on a second thought the concept of fidelity is infecund because it stumbles into both the form and the content of the literary text). To fend off the idea of “untranslation”, “the fact of not even attempting translation,” Hurtado Albir will say that “la traduction ne s’effectue pas seulement entre deux langues mais bien plus entre deux cultures différentes ; la traduction est donc une communication interculturelle. C’est le transfert d’éléments culturels contenus dans un texte de départ vers une langue cible, c’est l’une des difficultés majeures auxquelles sont confrontés les lecteurs-traducteurs” [Translation does not happen between just two languages, but between many languages and cultures. Translation is therefore an intercultural communication. In fact, it is the transfer of cultural elements in a source text towards a target language. This is one of the major challenges readers and translators are confronted with] ³

³ Hurtado Albir translated and quoted by Akrobou “Traduire la littérature africaine francophone, entre oralité et écriture: cas du roman *Les soleils des indépendances* d’Ahmadou Kourouma”, p. 80.

III. The english rendition and problems riddling it

The translation by Lucille Clifton is commendable; it allowed the English-speaking words to become familiar with Diop's beautiful and profound text. The translation may be furthered in order to fill up the lacunas left in it since 1974. A retranslation is necessary for obvious reasons. In fact, Diop's poem is very central in the Negritude movement because it may be ranked among the melancholic and elegiac accounts on Africa by one of her sons who did not know much about the continent, and who sought to reconnect and contribute to liberate vast land under the European dehumanizing colonial yoke.

Though the title of the poem is "Afrique" and rendered as "Africa," which is all the more normal because this provides a literal translation, delving into the poem and checking especially the verse where Diop accentuates his connection to/with Africa ("Afrique mon Afrique" [My beloved Africa]), one can reasonably propose a dynamic translation whereby the hidden meaning in the evocation of Africa is fully exposed to the enjoyment of readers. Thus, the title of the poem can be rendered as "Beloved Africa". This rendition refers back to the verse "Afrique mon Afrique" with resonance in the rest of the poem when Diop shows affection to Africa, which he knew only through stories told by his parents. When "Afrique mon Afrique" is translated as "Africa my Africa", such a rendition leaves somewhat to be desired in the sense that it ought to bring to the fore the idea of attachment and affection expressed in the French original. Thus, "Africa, my beloved continent or homeland" could have given a better sense to the reader.

Another challenge to Lucille Clifton's translation is the following verse: "Afrique des fiers guerriers dans les savanes ancestrales." Clifton translates the said verse as follows: "Africa of proud warriors roaming/ My grandfathers' plains". The first problem here is that this is a single verse that has been broken into two in order, probably, to affect a more English poetic tone. And yet, the two verses in English could be in one, by way of respecting the original verse in French. In order to have two verses, Clifton replaced the "dans" with a verb (roaming) in order to explain the expansion – a method proposed by Antoine Berman in literary translation – he did of the short verse in the original. Per se, this is a good move inasmuch as it adds the activity and function of the warriors in Africa. Yet, warriors do not roam in the African bush; they hunt games and in times of war, they wage war with adverse parties. An African person rather habituated to the savannah/bush, will dismiss outright the English meaning given by Clifton. In other words, a translator from Africa, A Francophone who knows English will find fault with this rendition as highlighted here. Thus, I advocate a translation immersed in the language-culture of the writer. Failure to proceed so, more often than not, creates problems of meaning in translation.

The second problem arises exactly from there. In Africa, the seasons in the different parts of the continent only give us regions where it rains a lot and where there is rainforest. Conversely, there are parts where rain is usually tardy and rare. In those places, there is bush, sometimes with tall trees only present in arid areas with temperate climate and where dry season is inclement to the people. Here, we have for instance the harmattan which most Sub-Saharan African and francophone poets and novelists refer to a great deal in their writings. Clifton speaks about plains like in the Americas. In North America, people speak about prairies where roam the Indians, buffalos, and other species of wild beasts.

Admittedly, we have vast pastureland with cows and others like in Kenya and other eastern African countries. The Africa that Diop refers to is mostly either West Africa (Senegal) or central Africa (Cameroon). Yes, he may also be including the entire continent in his poem, but savannah is mostly found in places just referred to above. “Savanes ancestrales” is translated as “grandfathers’ plains.” First, savannah is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the bush with wild animals that hunters kill. Plainly put, this could be rendered as the “savannah of the ancestors.” A more dynamic translation would be “the savannah” or the “bush” that our ancestors frequented and which are still available to their descendants.

The translation that is closer to the original meaning and spirit of Diop’s words is as follows: “the age-old savannah”, savannah being typically what we call our bush where hunters practice hunting and others feats of valor in Black Africa. Clifton’s rendition is Americo-centered, though it may be understood that her target was an American readership. This is also understandable in the sense that in terms of translation, there is the need to communicate and speak in a clear and audible language for the target language-culture. Added to this communicative need, there is the reality that Clifton intended to add hi/her own twist to the poetry of Diop. This is what Oseki-Dépré (1999, p.113) means when saying that “la traduction poétique entraîne inévitablement un processus de création littéraire. Dans ce sens, la traduction peut être conçue comme une fonction spécialisée de la littérature” [poetic translation inevitably leads to a process of literary creativity. In other words, translation may be seen as a specialized function of literature]. In other words, the translator needs to operate some responsible choice in the process of translation. Isn’t he/she the new author of the text under translation process?

As well, Lucille Clifton translates “Afrique que chante ma grand-mère au bord de son fleuve lointain” as “Africa of my grandmother singing/On the banks of her far river”. A literal translation of this should be: “Africa where my grandmother sings on the banks of her remote river.” Lucille Clifton’s rendition holds some Gallicisms in need of being struck out of the English version. Though literalism is not necessarily bad, in poetic translation it may carry the aesthetic of the original, but it is more likely to not carry originality.

Another important detail is the way the verse “Je ne t’ai jamais connue.” In fact, Clifton’s translation thus reads: “I have never known you.” In some way, this translation catches the message of the verse in its literality. It also shows that the translator’s concern is not to estrange from the original with contextual and dynamic details that may conflate the translate. Yet, for a work of this magnitude, it is definitely important to bring up the message in a way that also serves the text in the target language-culture. When Diop writes “Je ne t’ai jamais connue,” he means that he never saw Africa with his own eyes. Clifton’s rendition could have been better by highlighting this idea that reappears in the next verse “Mais mon regard est plein de ton sang”, which Clifton translates as follows: “but my eyes see with your blood.” Clearly, the idea of eyesight permeates the preceding verse “Je ne t’ai jamais connue”. In fact, “to know” here means in French to see, to know someone because one has laid eyes of the person. Such a translation is validated and legitimated by the French original “Mais mon regard est plein de ton sang” translated as can be seen above by Clifton. Yet, for the same of consistency and more clarity, a much better translation could read as follows: “I never laid my eyes on you.”

As well, the translation of “Ton beau sang noir à travers les champs répandu” raises some questions. First, the English translation reads: “Your sweet black blood/Flowering the fields.” David Diop (1992) rather sees beauty in the blood of the black person. This is the translation of his nationalism, even though the poet clearly distances himself from obscurantist and romanticizing Afrocentrism.⁴ Diop celebrates the beauty of Africanness

⁴ David Diop, talking about the pitfalls of nationalism and assimilation of the African poet, writes, “-Le créateur africain, privé de l’usage de sa langue et coupé de son peuple, risque de n’être plus que le représentant d’un courant littéraire (et pas forcément le moins gratuit) de la nation conquérante. Ses œuvres, devenues par l’inspiration et le style la parfaite illustration de la politique assimilationniste, provoqueront sans nul doute les applaudissements chaleureux d’une certaine critique. En fait, ces louanges iront surtout à la colonisation qui, lorsqu’elle ne parvient plus à maintenir ses sujets en esclavage. En fait des intellectuels dociles aux modes occidentales. [...] L’originalité à tout prix est aussi un danger. Sous prétexte de fidélité à la ‘négritude’, l’artiste africain peut se laisser aller à ‘gonfler’ ses poèmes de termes empruntés à la langue natale et à rechercher systématiquement le tour d’esprit ‘typique’. Croyant ‘faire venir les grands mythes africains’ à coups de tam-tam abusifs et des mystères tropicaux, il renverra en fait à la bourgeoisie colonialiste l’image rassurante qu’elle souhaite voir. C’est là le plus sûr moyen de fabriquer une poésie de ‘folklore’ dont seuls les salons où l’on discute ‘d’art nègre’ se déclareront émerveillés” [The African creator who is stripped of his language and cut off from his people runs the risk of being the mouthpiece of a literary current (not necessarily in a gratuitous way) of the conquering nation. His works, by way of inspiration and now the perfect illustrations of the assimilation policy, will undoubtedly yield welcoming ovations of a certain kind of critics. Actually, these ovations will accrue to colonialization which, when unable to keep its subjects in servility, turns them into intellectuals ready to consume Western fashions. [...] Originality at any cost is also a liability. Under the pretense of fidelity to Negritude, the African artist may fall prey to the conflating his poems with Africanisms borrowed from the local languages and cultures and to searching for a typically native way of understanding and expressing things. Because they seek to resuscitate the great African myths by way of

which is better rendered by the blood than the color of the skin in many regards. Clifton understands “beau sang” as “sweet blood”. The French original means beautiful for the eyes, not sweet for the taste since in the poetic imaginary, Diop, just like many Francophones, does not see blood in those tongue-related terms and meanings. The sentence in French could be reorganized otherwise. Thus, it could also thus read: “Ton beau sang noir répandu à travers les champs.” This way, the inversion in the sentence is straightened up and the reader sees that the poet means the black blood is said to be spilled over by the colonial masters through torture and mistreatment of the black person in forced labor in farmlands and roads made with bare hands during colonization. Yet, Clifton’s translation fragments the verse only to provide the English/Anglophone reader with rendition that truncates the real meaning of the message in French: “flowering the field.” The blood screened and spilled across the farms are not meant to be some sort of manure used in order to have a productive and fruitful farm. Rather, the sacred and beautiful blood was wasted. One can also reasonably ask the question as to how can some blood spilled with duress and cruelty be reimagined to mean something productive and positive. In other words, the verse is somewhat mistranslated and needs to be retranslated and cast back into circulation.

Another challenge, and not the least (for Clifton), is the rendition of the verse with the rhetorical question asked by Diop: “Est-ce donc toi ce dos qui se courbe/ Se couche sous le poids de l’humilité/ Ce dos tremblant à zébrures rouges qui dit oui au fouet sur la route de Midi” (Can this bent back be you/This back bearing humility/trembling with red stripes that/nod yes to the noon sun’s lash?). Of course, the question does not come with a question mark in the original, and the translator does provide the reader with one. Be that as it may seem, the rendition carries with it some semantic and cultural concerns. In fact, the question brings to the fore the not only the suffering of the Blackman in the hands of the tormenting colonizers, but also the courage and endurance qua humility expressed by the tortured. This is the story of a back that keeps on being bent because it carries impossible loads. It is the backs of a nation enduring pain inflicted upon it. As a matter of fact, this is why Diop speaks about “zébrures rouges qui dit oui au fouet” [marks seething with blood caused by the bullwhips ceaselessly falling on the back under the scorching sun of Sub-Saharan Africa.] I would rather translate these verses the following way: “Is that you with the back folded/ And being crushed under the weight of your own humility/ That trembling back yet with red marks/ Acquiescing to the bullwhip under the scorching sun at noon?” Here, the new English translation recontextualizes the verse and brings more semantic elements absent in the first translation. Besides, it is not the red stripes that “nod yes” to the whips; it is

excessive drum-beating and tropical mysteries, they thus provide the colonialist bourgeoisie with the encouraging image it wants to see. This is the door open for writing folkloristic poetry only relished by the book clubs where African art is showcased] (Diop 1974, p.153).

rather “the trembling back.” Clifton could also save the “that” at the end of verse 15 of her rendition. This could simply be the first word of verse 16.

Verses 18, 19, and 20, thus, read in French originally: “Alors gravement une voix me répondit/ Fils impétueux cet arbre robuste et jeune/ Cet arbre là-bas/ Splendidement seul au milieu des fleurs blanches et fanées.” Clifton’s translation these verses leaves some gaping holes. It reads “Rash son, this strong young tree/ This splendid tree/ apart from the white faded flowers.” “Fils impétueux” is not well-rendered; though in French it means “careless, impatient, intrepid” when speaking of a lad, Clifton simply begins the verse 18 with “Rash son” meaning that the groups of words have been skipped. Besides, the group of words “[...] cet arbre robuste et jeune/ Cet arbre là-bas” is rendered as “this strong young tree” instead of “this big and young tree/ This tree standing over there.” In fact, not only is “là-bas” (yonder/over there) not translated, but also the translator reorganizes the verses completely, running the risk of omitting some meaning intentionally or out of lack of appropriate meaning of the original message. The voice rather shows, points at the tree so that the addressee may get to it soon or later; it does not entreat the address to run up to the tree. Additionally, the tree is said to be standing up there alone, but in a splendid way. Diop does not say that the tree itself is splendid. Also, though the tree stands there alone, it is stands in the middle of the “white faded flowers” giving the sense that it is being surrounded by the said flowers. There is a nuance to observe for a better translation, and some semantic holes/lacunas to fill up. Lastly, it is important to maintain the line of thought of the poet; this is a matter of fidelity.

Mona Baker (2000, p.244) rightly states, “a translator cannot have, indeed should not have, a style of his or her own, the translator’s task being simply to reproduce as closely as possible the style of the original”. Diop writes that “C’est l’Afrique ton Afrique qui repousse.” Admittedly, the translator may take the liberty of repunctuating the English version as the French does not come with a coma when Clifton translates verse 21 as “Is Africa, your Africa”. The word “repousse” is used twice certainly to bring some emphasis to the fact that the maltreated tree is bent on growing up or burgeoning again. This stress needed to be underscored by the translator, thereby, translating the meaning of the message rather the words alone as it seems to be the case here. In French, just like in English, two adverbs may not succeed without a copula or a comma. In the original here (Qui repousse patiemment obstinément) Diop dismisses the use of a copula or a coma. For the sake of an improved grammar, the translator could, as Antoine Berman proposes, ennoble⁵ the verse

⁵ According to Berman, ennoblement as a method of translation. In fact, “This procedure is active in the literary field, but also in the human sciences, where it produces texts that are “readable,” “brilliant,” rid of their original clumsiness and complexity so as to enhance the “meaning.” This type of rewriting thinks itself

with the above-mentioned missing elements. In the event such a choice can be construed as an addition, it is one that brings to the fore the intended meaning of the message captured by the native speaker and reader of the French language.

Ultimately, the last observation pertains to the last two verses (Et dont les fruits ont peu à peu/ L'amère saveur de la liberté) rendered as "and its fruits are carefully learning / the sharp sweet taste of liberty." There is a discrepancy of sort between the original and the rendition in English. Diop means that the tree is gradually (peu à peu) getting a sense of freedom, though a freedom imprinted with raw and bad aftertaste. Freedom acquired by the sons and daughters of Africa in the decolonization process was hard-won; some people were maimed and killed. Such a freedom is sour, bittersweet for those who achieve it with indelible scars reminding the contexts and modes of its acquisition. Do we have this meaning in the English translation? The fruits were not "learning carefully"; they were having a taste of this freedom in a gradual way and a bitter aftertaste. Besides, Clifton translates "L'amère saveur de la liberté" by "the sharp sweet taste of the liberty". This could not be far removed from the original meaning. In fact, the correct translation is rather "bittersweet taste of freedom."

Conclusion: where do we go from here?

When a translation comes with faults and lacunas, it is best that it be corrected. Interestingly, the first translation came out in 1974. We are in the 21st century and the text must have a newer chance with translation. It must be retranslated. Nonetheless, one must raise the following questions in that regard: what is retranslation? When and how does retranslation happen? What needs to be retranslated here?

Retranslation is the process of proceeding with a new translation of an already translated material. The process involves updating information that was only cut for a specific period of times, a special kind of people and for a special form of understanding. When time elapses, and people change in terms of perceptions, worldviews and ways of speaking and understanding, it becomes imperative that the material be adapted to the latter. The need for retranslation may also arise from authorial and/or editorial decisions, from a new age printing process, from technological advancement and for reasons that may be political and/or ideological. At times, retranslation of the same material may be carried out by different translators for different markets. Here, this task may be subsumed under a form of retranslations "politically unconnected". Lastly, retranslations may also be carried by different publishing houses targeting the same readership. Here, the task is meant to show the best of the translations available. Adapting the material to these outmoded ways and

justified in recovering the rhetorical elements inherent in all prose—but in order to banalize them and assign them a predominant place" (Berman 2000 p.291).

items means that new vocabularies and new registers are called in. The point, here, is to make sure that the material is up for the practice of exchange, and intercultural interactions for the most part.

From the above, Diop's text needed to be retranslated because some meanings not well-rendered. This defeats the purposes of translation in the first place, thereby, abundantly obstructing the channels of understanding and communication. A new translation of "Afrique" will be a nice addition to the literature on what African means to some writers, as has been seen with poems by pioneering writers like David Diop, Abioseh Nicol, Countee Cullen in the US, and new and Pan-Africanist writers who, in this global village where homogenization takes precedence on attempts to promote difference and diversity, attempt to renew their attachment to their African roots, their authenticity. Of course, this has implication as Africa, much like any other places in the world, is not a monolithic space with no "act of culture", to borrow Amilcar Cabral's terminology.

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