

**REPRESENTING AFRICA THROUGH TRANSLATION:  
FERDINAND OYONO'S *UNE VIE DE BOY* AND *LE VIEUX  
NÈGRE ET LA MÉDAILLE* IN ENGLISH**

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## DECLARATION

I, Felix Nkwatta Awung, declare that the research thesis that I herewith submit for the doctoral degree **Doctor of Philosophy** qualification in Language Practice at the University of the Free State, is my independent work, and that I have not previously submitted it for a qualification at another institution of higher education.

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Date

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to use Pierre Bourdieu's sociological approach in investigating the social factors that influenced the translation of Ferdinand Oyono's *Une Vie de Boy* (1956) and *Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille* (1956). It is argued in the study that the decisions made in the process of translating *Une Vie de Boy* and *Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille* were influenced by the social forces prevalent in the literary field at the time the translations were produced. This is why Bourdieu's model has been adopted; it offers us the tools with which to understand the dialectic relationship between social agents and the fields in which they operate. It has thus been used in the study to demonstrate that there was a mutually influential relationship between the actions of the agents involved in the translations of *Une Vie de Boy* and *Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille* and the field in which the works were translated. In this regard, the study has done a macro-level and a textual level investigation of the actions of the agents involved in the translations of *Une Vie de Boy* and *Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille*.

At the macro-level, the study has mapped out the positions that made up the structure of the African literary field in which the translations were produced, the agents who occupied the said positions, and how this was influential to translation action at both the macro-level and the textual level. The findings reveal that John Reed's role in *The African Writers Series* as a critic, an advisor and a translator contributed in constructing the field of African literature in which Oyono's novels were translated, which in turn constrained his actions during the translation of the two novels. This study also argues that translation action at the textual level is constrained by the norms of the target literary field, as well as the translator's individual habitus. In this regard, an examination has been done on John Reed's strategies in the translation of culture-bound terms in *Une Vie de Boy* (1956) and *Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille* (1956). The data reveals that the translator's actions were influenced by a complex combination of the norms of the field, his individual habitus, as well as other constraining factors.

**Key terms:** Literary translation, Pierre Bourdieu, translation agents, African literature in European languages, culture-bound terms, *Une Vie de Boy*, *Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille*, *The African Writers Series*, John Reed.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AWS	African Writers Series
HB	Houseboy
LT	Literal translations
LVNM	Le Vieux Nègre et La Médaille
ST	Source text
TOMM	The Old Man and the Medal
TT	Target text
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
UVB	Une Vie de Boy

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

This study aims to adopt Pierre Bourdieu's sociological model to investigate John Reed's translations of Ferdinand Oyono's *Une Vie de Boy* (1956) and *Le Vieux Nègre et La Médaille* (1956). Translation has contributed greatly to African literature. However, while much has been said and written about the success of such works, little attention has been given to the translators who have bridged the intercultural gaps to make these works available in various languages, thereby representing the original authors in the target language cultures. Because literature portrays the norms, beliefs, and traditions of a particular society, its language is bound to be firmly embedded in the culture of that society. It is therefore interesting to examine how the translators of literature have managed to succeed in cutting across the world views of the various authors from one language to another. This is even more intriguing in the case of African literature written in European languages, since the original texts are in themselves a form of translation, initially conceived in the African languages of the authors before being rendered into the European languages (Ojo, 1986). Such is the case with Ferdinand Oyono's *Une vie de Boy* and *Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille* in English.

The fact that Reed's translations of the two novels fall within what Bandia (1993, 2008) calls a "two-tier translation", which is a translation of what is, in itself, a form of translation, gives the research a dimension which has not received much attention from researchers in the field of African literary translation. Given that every translation activity takes place within a specific social context, I argue that decision-making in the translation process is influenced by social factors and a sociological approach is needed to understand the nature and extent of the influence of the said social factors on the translation activity. It is in this regard that I adopt Bourdieu's theoretical framework because it offers a lens through which to examine how translation agents construct, and are constructed, by the field in which they operate. The study thus examines the mutually influential relationship between the literary field in which the English translations of Oyono's *Une vie de Boy* and *Le Vieux Nègre*

*et la Médaille* were produced, as well as the macro-level and textual level actions of the agents involved in the translation process.

## **1.2 Research problem**

Recent research in translation studies has underscored the role of the translator as an agent. In this regard, Baker (2006), Tymoczko (2007), Bandia (2008) and Gentzler (2008) , among others, assert that a translator is not just a conduit of a message from one language to another, but someone who is very much involved in the power interplay that determines the decision-making leading to the translated product. What this implies is that translators are agents of mediation who represent the original 'other' in the target language culture. The efficiency of such a representation is determined, as Sturge (2007) says, by the degree of the difference between the source and target cultures. Relating to translating African literature in European languages in particular, Bandia (2008:159) holds that the agency role of the translator is even more significant given that s/he is dealing with "a peculiar source text that is uncharacteristically different from most source texts translated between relatively close or non-distant languages and cultures". Given such peculiarity, it would be of interest to find out how similar or different are the forces that influence productions in this literary system to those that influence their translations. It is within this context that this study has as a research problem the investigation of how the translator of Ferdinand Oyono's *Une Vie de Boy* and *Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille* into *Houseboy* (1966) and *The Old Man and the Medal* (1967), respectively, has succeeded in his role as agent of cultural mediation, in representing the cultural world view of the author, and the social forces that influenced his translations.

## **1.3 Aim of the research**

This study aims to investigate how social factors influenced the actions of the translator of Ferdinand Oyono's *Une Vie de Boy* and *Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille* (hereafter referred to as *UVB* and *LVNM*) into *Houseboy* and *The Old Man and the Medal* (hereafter referred to as *HB* and *TOMM*), respectively. The study adopts Bourdieu's theoretical framework to examine the mutually influential relationship between the literary field and the translation actions.

## 1.4 Research questions

To achieve the aim of the study, the following research questions are addressed:

- How can Bourdieu's social theory help to explain translation actions in the production of Oyono's *Une Vie de Boy* and *Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille* in English?
- What role do literary and cultural aspects play in building up a picture of Ferdinand Oyono's world view?
- What are the strategies the translator uses to represent the cultural world view of the source texts in the target texts, especially as his European background is very remote from the world of the source texts?
- What are the social factors that influence the choices the translator makes in terms of his strategies, and how do they conform to or conflict with relevant theories on the subject?

## 1.5 Research methodology

This study adopts a sociological conceptual framework, which provides for the study of social phenomena by looking at the relationship between the agents involved in the phenomena and their social context. In this regard, the study focuses on the relationship between the social context and the agents involved in the English translations of *UVB* and *LVNM*, and the impact of that relationship on the actions of the agents involved. As a result, the methodological approach that I adopt is context-based in nature, given that I am looking at the social context of the translation activity and its influence on the actions of agents at the macro-level as well as textual level of the translation process.

It is worth mentioning that the debate on the most appropriate model of translation research has been a central theme of the discipline in recent years, with scholars advancing different approaches that focus on different aspects of translation (Angelelli & Baer, 2016; Mellinger & Hanson, 2017; Pym, 1998; Saldanha & O'Brien, 2013; William & Chesterman, 2002). While most studies tend to focus on one aspect of translation activity or another, in my view an integrated approach would be more appropriate as it provides a comprehensive study of translation phenomena. It is for this reason that I have adopted what I call an 'integrated context-based model', which

enables me to analyse the translator's agency by situating it within a field that integrates the context, the process, the agents, and the products, in a mutually influential network. This is in line with Bourdieu's social theory which underpins this study, and which provides for the study of social phenomena by looking at the dialectic relationship between agents' actions and their respective social contexts.

This study is qualitative in nature and adopts an exploratory and explanatory paradigm. According to Creswell (2014:4), qualitative research studies the human experience from a holistic and individual perspective and provide a framework within which to capture the experiences as they occur within the context of the humans concerned. In this regard, this research sets out to study the experiences of John Reed as a translator of African literature, with the specific case of the novels of Ferdinand Oyono. I have therefore adopted an exploratory and explanatory paradigm in order to investigate the context within which Reed translated *UVB* and *LVNM*, and also to analyse the causal factors that led to the production of the translation. I have also adopted an explanatory research approach with the aim to determine the relationship between the various factors that influenced the nature and impact of agency in Reed's translations.

The study adopts a case study method in which the data that was collected and analysed focused on the translations of a chosen translator. A case study is a method that enables a researcher to study anything from an individual, an institution, a product, or a process (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2013). According to Susam-Sarajeva (2009:40), this research method has been applied extensively in translation studies to study translation-related activities, products, or individuals in real-life situations, which can only be analysed or understood within their specific contexts. The research therefore focuses on the role of John Reed as an agent in the English translations of Oyono's two novels, and the social factors underpinning those translations. The advantage of using a case study method is that the method is intensive, flexible, and contextual (Susam-Sarajeva, 2009:39).

The choice of the translation of *UVB* and *LVNM* as a case study is because, in the context of the translation of African literature between European languages which foregrounds this study, the translator was one of the first translators, and remains one of the most successful to have worked in this literary category (Currey, 2008). Using his works as a case study is intended to understand the context within which

the novels were translated, so as to obtain useful insights into the roles of other agents involved and their influence on the textual level actions of the translation process.

### **1.5.1 Data collection instruments**

The data for this research is made up of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources have to do with information from the translator and publisher of the texts under study, as well as the binary corpus from the source and target texts. The secondary sources are made up of documentary information on the context of producing the translations. The information from the translator and the publisher was collected through internet-mediated interviews. I sent open-ended questions to the translator and the publisher through emails, and they returned their responses through the same means.

The advantage of using this method is that it enabled the participants to answer in their own time, which made it more convenient for me to get more detailed and thoughtful responses. I therefore sent them the questions without putting pressure on them, and they returned the responses a few days later. This gave them time to consult their records and collaborators, so as to respond in the most detailed and informed manner possible. The use of unstructured questions also meant that the participants could provide as much information as possible on the subject under discussion (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2013). It also meant that room was provided for follow-up questions to be asked based on the information provided by the participants. In this regard, a second set of questions were sent to the translator after he responded to the first ones, and the aim was to extract further information on the issues that were being studied.

The corpus data was collected through manual extraction in which culture-bound terms from the source texts were collected with their translations in the target texts, with the aim of understanding the transfer processes of the translator at the textual level of the translations. The terms collected from the two novels were grouped together, given that the two novels were published in the same year, and the translations were done by the same translator at around the same time, and published in the same year. The terms were thus presented together, specifying the texts from which they were extracted

Secondary sources were also used in this study, and these were collected through a documentary method. These secondary sources mainly had to deal with the social and cultural context within which the translations under study were produced. As such, historical documentation, as well as critical works pertaining to the contexts of the source texts and the target texts, were processed for information that could throw light on the author, the social environment, and the publication and reception of the source texts, and also on the environments of the target texts. This documentation was mostly in the form of books and internet-generated articles.

### **1.5.2 Data analysis**

The data collected was presented using an integrated context-based approach in which the data was analysed in a twofold way. The first part of the analysis had to do with the context data, while the second part involved the corpus data. The context data was partitioned into two sections, in which the social context of the production of the translation was analysed, followed by an analysis of the findings from the interviews with the translator and publisher. The corpus data was analysed through a binary comparison of the source and target texts. This was done using a sociological method in which micro-textual translation processes were analysed against the background of social factors that might have influenced decision-making. This mainly had to do with the translation of the culture-bound discourse. In this regard, culture-bound terms were manually identified from the source texts and compared with their renditions in the target texts, accompanied by an explanation of the sociological factors that might have influenced the decisions of the translator.

### **1.6 Significance of the study**

This study explores the agency role of the translator in representing the other with the intention that it would contribute to the current literature in the domain of translation in general and particularly translation research. Furthermore, the study throws light on how the actions of translation agents are influenced by social factors prevalent in the field of the translation production. Lastly, the study produces new data that highlights the context within which the translation of African literature is done.

## 1.7 Scope of the study

This study adopts a case study method. Although the results of a case study can offer lenses through which to understand different contexts, they cannot be generalised (Susam-Sarajeva, 2009:53). In this regard, the findings of the study of Reed's translations of *UVB* and *LVNM* may not be generalised to other contexts.

## 1.8 Outline of chapters

This study is structured into six chapters:

- **Chapter 1** introduces the study and the reasons for undertaking it.
- **Chapter 2** focuses on Bourdieu's social theory and sociological approaches to translation studies.
- **Chapter 3** deals with the conceptualisation and application of agency as a theoretical framework.
- **Chapter 4** focuses on the social context within which the translations were produced.
- **Chapter 5** focuses on the corpus of the study with an analysis of the culture-bound terms in the two novels in question, and the strategies used by the translator to translate them from French into English.
- **Chapter 6** outlines the conclusions of the study and analyses the contributions of the research to research in translation studies.

## TOWARDS THE SOCIOLOGY OF TRANSLATION

### 2.1 Introduction

This study adopts Bourdieu's theoretical framework to analyse the translations of Ferdinand Oyono's *UVB* and *LVNM*. Sociological approaches have increasingly become important to translation studies as they allow for an analysis of translation that goes beyond the individual text to look at the social influences that determine various aspects of translation. My argument is that the decisions made in the process of translating *UVB* and *LVNM* were influenced by the social forces prevalent in the literary field at the time the translations were produced. I therefore intend to analyse the social forces that influenced the actions of John Reed through the course of his translations of Oyono's two novels, and how his actions also contributed in shaping the literary field within which he operated. It is for this reason that I adopt Bourdieu's sociological theory as a framework as it would enable me to look at how the literary field constructed, and was constructed by, the agents involved in the translation of the two novels.

This chapter sets the preamble to the conceptualisation of agency as a theoretical framework in line with Bourdieu's model, by situating it within sociological approaches to translation studies. In this regard, the chapter begins with a historical overview of developments in translation studies, leading to the sociological turn in the discipline, then delves into the sociological approaches and their implications for translation studies.

### 2.2 The emergence of the sociological turn in translation studies

This study adopts Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus and capital to investigate agents' actions in translation. In talking about the field, Bourdieu (1971:66) argues that it is the result of a historical process of autonomisation and internal differentiation, and as such cannot be studied without associating it to the historical and social conditions under which it was developed. The implication that this has for translation studies is that every theoretical shift in its evolution is the result of historical events that take place in the discipline prior to the period under consideration.

It is therefore my contention that the study of the sociological turn in translation studies needs to look at the historical processes that led to its development. It is in this regard that research in translation studies is increasingly highlighting the need to explore the history of the discipline (Bandia, 2006; Pym, 1998; Santayo, 2006). Bastin and Bandia (2006:9) assert that while the past thirty years have seen a significant increase in research activities relating to the history of translation, the area deserves more attention than it is currently receiving. What is worth mentioning about translation history and translation studies is that, while translation has been going on since people speaking different languages began interacting with each other, the conceptualisation of translation history as an academic discipline is quite recent. It is in this regard that Santayo (2006:13) argues that there are still many gaps in translation history, and translation studies is still far from having at its disposal a global and globalising vision of what the translating activity has been throughout its approximately 4500 years of history. He further adds that although parts of this history have been well-charted, there still remain vast unknown territories in that universal history; territories which concern not only places and time, but also whole fields of enquiry and research (Santayo, 2006:13).

This clearly highlights the fact that translation studies would not be complete without a comprehensive historical exploration of what translation activities have been like from the traceable period when people from different language communities started to interact with each other, as well as the social role of translators in bridging cultural gaps throughout the course of human history. While most scholars share Santayo's argument on the need to fill the gaps in translation history, such a consensus does not exist in the manner in which they think this has to be done. Some scholars hold that such research should form part of research on translation studies, while others such as Bandia (2006) and Pym (1998), argue that it should constitute a discipline on its own with its own specialists and methodologies:

Given the seriousness of the translation historian's task and in light of recent developments in translation studies, it is indeed within reason to seek to establish translation history as an autonomous discipline with its own objectives and methodologies (Bandia, 2006:14).

Another issue that seems to divide scholars of translation studies is that of the periodisation of translation activities. Notwithstanding the recent interest in translation

history, most of the research still finds it difficult to precisely situate the period that marks the beginning of translation activities in history. According to Foz (2006:138):

[T]he various periodizations applied to this phenomenon over the course of the last fifty years demonstrate a variety of differing points of view and approaches. While some of these focus on practices, others prefer to reflect upon the surrounding theories.

This shows the need for research in translation history to uncover more facts so as to highlight the issue of periodisation. What is noteworthy here is that even with the periodisation debate, most of what is written focuses on documented evidence from history. According to Santayo (2006:13), translation activities started approximately 4 500 years ago. This claim is probably based on the archaeological evidence of bilingual scripts found in the Sumerian civilisations dating back to the same period. This, however, raises the question as to whether there were no language contacts to suggest translation before the advent of the culture of writing.

Historical evidence points to the prehistoric migration of different people with different languages thousands of years before the period indicated by Santayo (2006), and it can be logically claimed that such contacts could not have been successful without language mediation, thereby suggesting translation activities. While any claim of translation activities in the prehistoric period can only be a matter of assumption due to the absence of documented evidence, it would equally be creating gaps in translation history in neglecting it as not constitutive of any translation activity. It is in line with this that Bandia (2005:959) asserts that while research work by missionaries and explorers show evidence of translation activities in Africa before colonial times, it should be noted that such activities had been going on for a lengthy period among the many different language communities of the continent before European contact, and this has been lost to documentation as a result of the fact that African communities had an oral culture rather than one based in writing.

Another gap that should be mentioned about translation history has to do with the fact that most of what has been written, tends to focus more on translation practised mostly in formal contexts, which significantly neglects the multilingual interactions that have been going on between language communities away from the formal situations of institutional negotiations or mediations. Research in translation studies

has recently begun to focus on activities in the informal sector (Gentzler, 2008; Marais, 2014), and given that such activities have always been going on, it would be necessary that translation history explores the contributions of the informal sector to the development of the discipline.

It is thus clear that much still has to be done for a comprehensive history of translation to be available, and this would require a more detailed research with specific focus on the area of study. It is my argument that such attention to the history of translation would highlight the social contexts within which translators have historically functioned as mediators between different cultures throughout the course of human history. My intention here has been to argue that even though I focus on the documented evidence of the theorisation of translation, a scholarly injustice is being done to what has not been documented, but which has contributed to the evolution of what today constitutes translation studies. The next session discusses activities in the areas of the practice and theory of translation from the 1950s, because it is the period that marked the emergence of translation studies as an academic discipline (Tymoczko, 2007:18).

### **2.3 Translation studies from the 1950s**

Translation has played a crucial role in both the political and cultural evolution of human history. The practice goes back a long time in history and has greatly contributed to the various stages of human evolution by being very much involved in the expansion of empires, dissemination of educational and philosophical knowledge, and the spread of dominant religions. However, intellectual reflections on the discipline before the twentieth century are only dotted in history, and these reflections are not theory *per se*, but practical guides on how to approach translation (Tymoczko, 2007:18).

Furthermore, most of the intellectual reflections on translation prior to the period after World War II were dominated by issues of free *versus* literal translation and that of translatability *versus* untranslatability (Munday, 2008; Robinson, 2002; Venuti, 2012). Translation studies emerged as an academic discipline after World War II (Venuti, 2012; Tymoczko, 2007), and this explains why the historical perspective presented in this study begins in the 1950s. It is therefore, my contention that this period is a significant starting point for events that have shaped the evolution of

translation studies and thereby contributed to the emergence of the sociological approaches to the study of the discipline. It is in this regard that I present a critical overview of the major shifts that have contributed to the development of the sociological turn in translation studies, such as the linguistic approaches, the functionalist approaches, the system-oriented approaches, and the cultural approaches.

The 1950s marked a significant period for translation studies, as studies in the discipline flourished, culminating in translation developing into an academic discipline (Snell-Hornby, 2006:20). The pace was set by scholars from predominantly linguistic traditions who focused primarily on linguistic models to conceptualise translation. The central theme of studies at the time was the problem of equivalence, and the different approaches that emerged have significantly contributed to what translation studies has become. The structuralist linguist, Roman Jakobson, was one of the major influential theorists of the early days of modern translation studies. Jakobson (1959) argues that any comparison of two languages implies the examination of their translatability, and as such, translation should be closely guided by linguistic science. Concerning the concept of equivalence in meaning between words in different languages, he argues that there can be no full equivalence between two words (Jakobson, 1959). The focus of Jakobson's argument is on the function of language, and the interlinguistic differences that exist between different languages (Munday, 2008:37). He thus looked at translation as a practice underpinned by linguistic constraints to which translators should find solutions.

The problem with Jakobson's view is that translation involves more than linguistic transfer (Snell-Hornby, 2006:21), as there are factors other than linguistic factors that influence translation activities. It is my view that there is an implied 'social factor' in Jakobson's linguistic argument because it involves humans, who are socialised individuals. I therefore contend that Jakobson's linguistic view of translation has social implications in the sense that the encoding and decoding of the language signs he talks about is bound to be affected by the social system of the individuals involved.

Another prominent theorist, Eugene Nida, continues with Jakobson's notion of equivalence, and further elaborates on it by arguing that there are two basic types of equivalence: formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence (Nida & Taber, 1969).

Formal equivalence is translation in which the target text resembles the source text as closely as possible in both form and content, while dynamic equivalence is about conveying the message in the target language as naturally as possible, in order to elicit the same response from the receptor as that of the source text receptor. Nida advocates for dynamic equivalence as the most effective translation procedure, as it goes beyond correct communication of information to include the receptor's response to the message. His views were very much influenced by his Bible translation project, and hardly went beyond that to look at other areas of translation (Venuti, 1995:22). His approach was thus source-text oriented as his aim was to ensure that God's words were passed across to other languages unviolated (Gentzler, 2001:46). His focus on dynamic equivalence was thus to ensure that receptors of the Bible message in different language communities would respond to the message in the same way as the source text receptors. Venuti (1995:21) has criticised Nida's approach for being too source-text oriented, thereby overlooking the differences that exist between the language systems of the source and target texts.

Despite the limitations of Nida's focus on linguistic factors, his dynamic equivalence approach in my view has social implications, as it introduces the notion of the receptor's response to the translated message. I argue that the receptor's interpretation and response to a message is influenced by social factors in the receptor's social environment. Therefore, although Nida does not advocate for social factors to be considered in translation, it is difficult to see how his receptors would react to a message purely based on linguistic factors.

John Catford (1965), on his part, asserts that translation involves a relational activity between two languages and as such should be considered as a branch of comparative linguistics. He looks at translation from the angle of communication operating within a specific context and at different levels. He upholds the equivalent concept and argues that the concept can be divided into two types: formal equivalence and textual equivalence (Catford, 1965:27). He also introduces the notion of translation shifts, which are the differences in language structures that come into play when a message is translated from the source language into the target language (Catford, 1965:73). His focus was thus on the comparative structures of languages and his approach in the discourses of translation (Tymoczko, 2007:29).

Snell-Hornby (1988:20) has criticised Catford's approach as inadequate and too simplistic to address the more complex problems of real-time translation. Despite the limitations that may exist in his approach, Catford's views have been influential in translation studies, especially with regard to the enlargement of the boundary of machine translation (Joshua, 2008:4). I contend that although Catford's approach focuses primarily on the linguistic aspects of translation, it does have social implications given that the operations of the linguistic choices are carried out by humans, whose social environments always affect the decisions they make.

The linguistic period is thus a very significant turn in translation studies as it sets the pace for what would become an academic discipline. In spite of their shortcomings as a result of their over-reliance on linguistic principles to explain translation, linguistic theories have continued to influence translation studies. Translator training continues to heavily rely on linguistic theories and aspects of linguistics continue to attract the attention of scholars in the discipline (Saldanha, 2008:149). It is, however, my contention that while linguistic approaches offer a framework within which to understand the linguistic operations that underpin translation processes, they do not explain the social factors that influence translators' actions during translation activities.

In the 1970s, translation theorists started drifting away from the linguistic approaches in favour of approaches that took broader issues of social and cultural contexts into consideration. Translation studies increasingly put more emphasis on target-text oriented theories as opposed to source-text oriented theories, with the inclusion of cultural factors as well as linguistic elements in the translation training models (Gentzler, 2001:26). This saw the emergence of functionalist approaches, which considered the purpose of a translation in a given target culture to be the determining factor in how a translation is done and evaluated (Munday, 2008:72).

Katharina Reiss (1977) initiated the functionalist approach, with the aim of systematising translation assessment (Munday, 2008:72). She built on the equivalence concept to argue that translation equivalence should operate at a functional level and not a linguistic level. She contends that different text types have different functions, and translation should be done following the function of the text involved (Pym, 2009:47). This implies that a translated text should recreate the function of the original, without focusing on the equivalence of the linguistic

components of the source and target texts. Reiss' views marked a significant shift from the linguistic approaches by going beyond linguistic factors to focus on the function of texts (Reiss, 1977).

The functionalist approach was further taken up by Hans Vermeer, who worked with Reiss to develop the skopos theory (Reiss & Vermeer, 1984). The skopos theory is more target-text oriented and contends that the dominant factor of every translation is determined by its target text function (Reiss & Vermeer 1984:96). This implies that the purpose of a translation is to fulfil a particular function in the target text culture, whose audience is certainly different from that of the source text. As such, a source text can generate different translations to suit different target audiences. A translation is therefore more prospective than retrospective (Snell-Hornby, 2006:54), as the target text takes precedence over the source text. In this regard, Nord (1997:74) argues that the act of translation is determined by the purpose of the translation, and translation assessment needs to focus on whether the translation meets the intended function that the translation was meant to achieve in the target text. This implies that the translator is no longer tied to the source text, as one text can be translated in different target texts to fulfil different functions (Pym, 2009:43). The significance of the functionalist approaches is that the determination of the purpose of a translation should be the focus in the translation of a text, or its assessment.

It is my contention that purpose determination has sociological implications because it brings into play the agents involved in a translation activity, such as the translator, the client, and the receptor, and how they all affect the translator's actions during the translation process. I, however, argue that functionalist approaches are insufficient to explain translation action as they do not consider the social factors that constrain the actions of the translator and other agents involved in a translation.

Views on translation studies further shifted in the 1970s beyond the linguistic factors and developed into descriptive and systemic approaches (Hermans, 1999:9), which put emphasis on the role of translation in the target system and the norms underpinning translation decisions. Even-Zohar (1978) initiated this approach in his poly-system theory, which was taken up by Gideon Toury in his *Descriptive translation studies and beyond* (Toury, 1995). Drawing from the works of the Russian formalist, Tynjanov's literary systems, Even-Zohar developed the poly-system theory in the 1970s with the aim of resolving translation problems related to Hebrew

literature (Shuttleworth, 1998:176). The approach argued that translation is carried out in a context of a 'poly-system' of various systems which are interdependent and partly overlap, but functions as a structured whole (Even-Zohar 1990:12). Even-Zohar's intention was to explain the place and function of translated texts in the general literary system of a given culture. He therefore sees a literary system as inter-systemic, as it brings together different sociocultural factors, institutions, and agents. Translation is thus perceived as one of the interdependent systems of the literary system and can either occupy a central or peripheral position within a target literary system, depending on the role it plays in the said system.

What is significant in Even-Zohar's approach, is that it introduces the issue of the context of translation and how this constrains the decisions and actions of the agents involved. It is in this regard that I contend that the poly-system theory has sociological implications in that it highlights the role of the context of translation activities and the agents involved therein. Despite the poly-system theory's contribution to the expansion of translation studies, the approach has been criticised for being too systemic and text-bound, without taking into consideration the social actors involved in translation activities (Hermans, 1999; Wolf, 2007b). I concur that Even-Zohar's approach focuses on the systemic nature of literary texts, and as such does not provide a model with which to explain the actions of the various agents involved in translation activities.

Toury (1980) built on the poly-system theory to develop a descriptive approach to translation studies, which introduced the concept of norms as the factors that constrain decision-making during translation activities (Liang, 2010:35). His goal was to explain the hierarchical factors that constrain the translation product (Gentzler, 2001:127). Toury (1995) argues that translations are shaped by norms of the target system, which influence decision-making at every stage of the translation process, both at the level of text selection to be translated and the choice of strategies during the transfer process.

Toury (1995:56) distinguishes three types of norms that are operative at different stages of the translation process: preliminary norms, initial norms, and operational norms. Preliminary norms refer to the factors that determine the selection of texts for translation, as well as how the translation would fit into the target system; initial norms refer to the initial decision of the translator to either submit himself/herself to

the source text or target text norms; while operational norms refer to the decisions made by the translator with regard to the strategies to adopt during the translation process.

Toury argues that an in-depth analysis of these norms would throw more light on the behavioural patterns involved in translation activities (Wolf 2007b:9). Toury developed his concept by comparing the different translations of an original text by different translators at different periods in history (Gentzler, 2001:128). What is significant in Toury's approach is that it shifts the focus of translation studies from the normative perspective to a descriptive approach, which takes translation as it is and tries to determine the various factors that may account for its particular nature. Furthermore, the view of norms as social factors that constrain the behaviours of agents involved in translation activities, raises the issue of the 'social' in translation and would become very influential in the development of sociological approaches to translation studies (Wolf, 2007b). Toury's (1995:250) argument that norms are internalised by translators and enable them to respond spontaneously to translational situations is synonymous to Bourdieu's notion of habitus (see section 2.5.3), which is internalised by agents to become their mechanism of perceptions and actions.

Despite the significant contribution of Toury's theory to translation studies, his approach has been criticised for being too general and not able to explain the irregular choices made by translators (Gouanvic, 2005:158). It is in this regard that Yannakopoulou (2008:4) has argued that Toury's approach does not offer a model to explain translation actions that go contrary to the prevalent norms. Furthermore, Wolf (2007b:9) contends that while norms can explain a wide range of elements in translation behaviour, Toury fails to link them to the sociocultural factors that condition the said norms. I concur with Wolf that although norms are important factors that can be used to explain translational actions, their conceptualisation should consider the sociocultural factors that define their specific context. This implies that the norms may be adhered to or not, and these decisions are themselves constrained by social factors in the context within which the agents involved operate. It is for this reason that I contend that sociological approaches are more suited to explain translation actions because they do not only look at how norms constrain the actions of agents, but also how agents, through their actions, shape the norms of the field.

Toury's descriptive translation approach culminated in what was referred to as the manipulation school, which made its mark by the publication of a compilation edited by Theo Hermans in 1985, titled *The manipulation of literature. Studies in literary translation*. This was not a school *per se*, but a movement that brought together scholars who shared a common descriptive approach to translation, and an interest in the norms that constrain translation activities (Gentzler, 2001:132). Their aim was to use different case studies to demonstrate that literary translation should adopt a descriptive, target-oriented, functional, and systemic approach (Hermans, 1985). The manipulation scholars contributed in expanding the study of translation as an interdisciplinary, as was evidenced in Lefevere's concept of translation as rewriting, which is constrained by issues of poetics, patronage, and ideology (Hermans, 1999:43).

This was a significant expansion on how to look at translation as it brought into play sociocultural factors such as power relations, institutions, ideology, and agents, which all constrain translation activities. It is in this regard that Wolf (2007b:10) contends that Lefevere underscored important social dimensions in his views, which were significant in the emergence of sociological approaches to the study of translation. I therefore argue that by going beyond textual factors to look at macro-textual factors that constrain translation actions, descriptive translation studies' approaches were influential in the development of sociological trends in translation studies. Their over-reliance on systemic factors does not, however, offer sufficient tools with which to explain the actions of the agents involved in translation activities. It is for this reason that I contend that sociological approaches are more suited to explain the actions of translation agents.

At the beginning of the 1990s, translation studies took a major shift in embracing cultural perspectives in the theorisation of the discipline. This developed mostly from the systemic approach of the manipulation school, especially with Lefevere's (1985) rewriting concept which brought into play the role of power, culture, and ideology in constraining translation actions. The major provision of this cultural turn in translation studies is that it criticises the linguistic approaches by arguing that translation should go beyond language and focus on the interaction between translation and culture, and on the way culture impacts and constrains translation, as well as on the larger issues of context, history, and convention (Snell-Hornby 2006:49). Like the

descriptive approaches, it focuses on the target text and treats a translation as independent of the original. This approach was first embraced by Bassnet and Lefevere (1990), who argue that the cultural context of a translation has a significant bearing on the strategies to adopt and the nature of the final product. In the words of Bassnet and Lefevere (1998:3):

[W]e are no longer 'stuck to the word', or even the text, because we have realised the importance of context in matters of translation. One context is, of course, that of history. The other context is that of culture. The questions that now dominate the field are able to dominate it because research has taken a 'cultural turn', because people in the field began to realise, some time ago, that translations are never produced in a vacuum, and that they are also never received in a vacuum.

In other words, the cultural context within which a translator works, the intended function of the translation in the target text culture and the cultural expectations of the target text audience are the factors that shape the nature of a translation, and not the languages involved. Another important aspect of the cultural school of translation is that it views translation as re-writing. Taking from the post-structuralist approaches, it considers a translation to be independent of the original, given that the original is produced within a given cultural context that is different from the one in which the translation is produced or intended. In this regard, Lefevere (1998:93) argues that:

Translation never takes place in a vacuum; it always happens in a continuum, and the context in which the translation takes place necessarily affects how the translation is made. Just as the norms and constraints of the source culture play their part in the creation of the source text, so the norms and conventions of the target culture play their inevitable role in the creation of the translation.

The cultural turn was also significant in the sense that, for the first time, the translator became an important object of translation studies. Previous theories had always focused on the translator's objectivity, but cultural translation argues that the translator's role is a subjective one, thus making him an important component of the translation chain. This is made particularly evident by cultural theorists such as Venuti, who argues that the translator should break the chains of his invisibility by translating in a way that gives the translation a place in the target culture. Venuti (2004:1) introduces the notions of foreignisation and domestication as approaches that can best highlight the translator's role as a cultural mediator. It is however, my

argument that while the cultural turn underscores the sociocultural contexts of translation, it does not give much insights into the social factors that influence the role of the translator in a translation activity.

Interdisciplinarity of cultural approaches dominated the 1990s and the early parts of the 2000s and inspired other approaches which, though coming under other appellations, were very much in the ambit of the cultural trend as they addressed different aspects of asymmetrical power relations in cultural systems (Munday, 2008:131). Such was the case with gender-based approaches, which aimed at using translation to address the complexities of gender and culture (Simon, 1996), postcolonial approaches which focused on the role of translation in addressing the power imbalances between colonised societies and the colonial authorities (Cronin, 1996; Niranjana, 1992; Tymoczko, 1999), and power-related approaches, which looked at the role of translation in issues of cultural and ideological dominance and resistance (Baker, 2006; Gentzler & Tymoczko, 2002; Venuti 1995). The power-related issues provided the impetus for the social view of translation phenomena, leading to the sociological turn (Wolf, 2007:12b), which has dominated the last two decades of translation studies.

#### **2.4 The sociological turn in translation studies**

In recent years, research in translation studies has been marked by an increasing attention on the role of translators and the social factors that influence the production and consumption of translations (Gouanvic, 2005; Hermans, 2007; Inghelleri, 2005; Pym, 2006; Tyulenev, 2014; Wolf, 2012). The social aspect of translation has always been present in reflections on translation phenomena, but it is only recently that studies started incorporating social factors in the conceptualisation of the discipline (Simeoni, 2005). This sociological turn emerged as result of the limitations of text-bound approaches in addressing the social role of agents involved in translation phenomena (Wolf, 2007b). With Even-Zohar and Toury's system-oriented approaches introducing the idea of the 'sociocultural' in the study of translation, the discipline opened itself up to a more interdisciplinary perspective which culminated in the cultural turn in translation studies (Liang, 2010:27). The cultural turn marked an expansion of the interdisciplinary views on translation studies by addressing broader questions related to the translation phenomena (Wolf, 2007b:3). In this regard, studies started drawing from different methodological tools to address the

multifaceted aspects of translation phenomena. It is this trend that led to the adoption of sociological approaches to the study of translation, signalling the emergence of a sociological turn which has dominated the discipline since the late 1990s (Hanna, 2016:2). This sociological turn views translation as a social practice carried out by agents who are influenced by various social factors. Wolf (2012:10) has framed the context of the sociological implications of translation studies in the following words:

On the one hand, the act of translating, in all its various stages is undeniably carried out by individuals who belong to a social system; on the other, the translation phenomenon is inevitably implicated in social institutions, which greatly determine the selection, production, and distribution of translation, and, as a result, the strategies adopted in the translation itself.

The relevance of this assertion is that it views translation as a socially constrained activity, which does not take place in a vacuum, but is situated within a specific social context whose configurations inevitably influence the translation process. Consequently, translation analysis needs to adopt approaches that highlight the interactional network of the social forces that constrain the translation process.

Wolf (2007b) argues for a sociological approach to the discipline by portraying that, although social aspects have until recently been neglected by translation research, they have historically always been part of translation. Through an overview of the major works that have shaped the sociological turn in translation studies, Wolf (2007a/b:13) conceptualises translation sociology as constitutive of three angles: sociology of translation agents, sociology of the translation process, and the sociology of the translation product.

These different angles are not separated from each other, as they overlap and interconnect, but rather serve as lenses through which to better perceive the interactional forces that regulate translation activities. Wolf (2012:1) further argues that sociological approaches have shifted the focus of translation studies to under-researched areas of the discipline, such as institutional impact on translation practice, working conditions, as well as aesthetic and political questions. According to Wolf (2012:11), these approaches have led to the adoption of methodological tools in translation research, which deliver valuable results:

The adoption of sociological analytical tools has deepened, on the one hand, our understanding of the mechanisms that underlie the manifestations of translatorial invisibility. On the other hand, these tools have helped us identify the interactional relations that exist between the external conditions of a text's creation and the adoption of various translation strategies during the translation process in the narrower sense.

The relevance of Wolf's argument lies in the fact that she highlights the dialectic relationship that exists between translation agents and their social contexts, given that the agents construct, and are constructed, by their contexts. This shows the relevance of analysing the behaviour of translators as the result of the relationship they share with their contexts. Scholars who have studied translation phenomena using sociological approaches, have predominantly used the works of Anthony Giddens (Van Rooyen, 2013), Bruno Latour (Buzelin, 2005; Kung, 2009), Niklas Luhmann (Hermans, 2007; Tyulenev, 2010), and Pierre Bourdieu (Gouanvic, 2005; Hanna, 2016; Inghilleri, 2005; Liang, 2010; Simeoni, 1998; Wolf, 2007b).

It is my contention that Bourdieu's approach is more suitable for the current study because it enables me to look at translation agency in the light of the dialectic relationship between the context and the agents involved in the translation of *UVB* and *LVNM* into English.

## **2.5 Outline of Bourdieu's social theory**

The work of Pierre Bourdieu has been highly influential in translation studies in the last two decades, as can be testified by the number of research studies drawn from his conceptual tools (Gouanvic, 2005; Hanna, 2016; Inghilleri, 2005; Liang, 2010; Simeoni, 1998; Wolf, 2007b). Through his key concepts of field, habitus and capital, Bourdieu has contributed in shaping the way translation studies attempts to conceptualise the complex nature of translation phenomena (Hanna, 2016:1).

It is in this regard that I adopt his theory in the current study, because it enables me to analyse the complex issue of agency, especially with regard to the mutual dependence of translation agents and their social contexts. Bourdieu's conceptual tools of field, habitus, and capital therefore enable me to look at how the literary field in which the English translations of *UVB* and *LVNM* were produced, constrained the actions of the agents involved in the process, and how the actions of these agents

also contributed in shaping the said field. Furthermore, the fact that Bourdieu's theory has been so widely applied to translation studies, allows me to be able to compare my application with what other scholars of translation studies have done. In what follows, I do a critical overview of Bourdieu's notions of field, habitus, and capital in order to highlight their relevance to translation analysis, and their suitability to the study of Reed's translation of *UVB* and *LVNM* into English.

### **2.5.1 Bourdieu's theory of practice**

The origin of Bourdieu's theory can be traced to the prevalent philosophical trends in France in the late 1950s and the 1960s, during which theoretical thinking centred on the dualism of objectivism *versus* subjectivism (Liang, 2010:59). Objectivism, or structuralism, viewed human action as trapped and determined by the social structure, while subjectivism or agency viewed the individual as the instigator of all action (Hanna, 2016:16). Bourdieu sought to reconcile this binary opposition by proposing a social theory grounded on structuralist constructivism or constructivist structuralism (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:11). He argues that agency and structure are mutually dependent given that the agents construct, and are constructed, by their social contexts (Bourdieu, 1977). This implies that while the actions of agents in a particular field are constrained by the rules of the field, the agents also shape the rules of the same field through their actions. Bourdieu therefore perceives agency not as the opposition between the individual and the structure, but rather as a dialectic relationship between the two. Bourdieu (1984:101) illustrates this conceptualisation by using the formula:

$$[(\text{habitus}) (\text{capital})] + \text{field} = \text{practice}$$

The concepts of field, habitus and capital are thus at the centre of Bourdieu's theory, and he developed them as fruitful tools with which to explain the relational forces that generate human behaviour and actions (Lahire and Wells, 2010:444). His theory has come to influence academic research in a wide variety of disciplines, including translation studies (Gouanvic, 2005; Inghilleri, 2005; Wolf, 2007b). This section thus examines the notions of field, habitus, and capital, followed by an overview of how they have been increasingly applied to translation studies within the sociological turn of the discipline.

### 2.5.2 The notion of field

Bourdieu developed the concept of field in opposition to the structuralist and systemic models, which were the prevalent tools for the representation and explanation of social reality at the time, and which he criticised for limiting themselves to describing the material realities of the social world, without taking into consideration the role of social agents in constructing these realities (Hanna, 2016:20). He therefore sought to show that the structure was not independent of the actions of social actors and *vice versa*. He defines a field as:

a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present or potential situation ... in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as their objective relation to other positions (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:97).

In this regard, a field is seen as a relatively structured domain of a specific activity within which different agents occupy a set of positions that relate to each other and respect a particular hierarchy. It is autonomous, and its functions are guided by its own rules and institutions, which are imposed on the occupants of the field, who both recognise and respect the rules (Warde, 2004:12).

There are therefore different autonomous fields, such as the fields of religion, economics, education, law and literature, and their autonomy is determined by the constraints and control mechanisms that apply to the activities of the specific field, and which differentiates it from other fields (Bourdieu, 1991:177). The field is made up of objective positions which are occupied by different actors and institutions who compete for the legitimate resources which the field offers (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1989:40). 'Objective positions' implies that the positions are occupied based on the volume and structure of the capital or resources that the agent has accumulated in relation to other actors occupying other positions in the same field (Hilgers & Mangez, 2014:10). The field is therefore an arena of struggle in which agents compete for the interests which they recognise as accruing from the field (Hanna, 2016:21).

This implies that there is a hierarchical structure in the positions of the field, and agents seek to accumulate resources that would enable them to move to a position of greater influence on the activities of the field, thereby creating a situation of struggle or competition, in which agents then strive to conserve or transform the structure of the field (Bourdieu, 1985:734). Agents possess different resources (capital) and dispositions (habitus) with which they enter the field, and which determine the positions they take and the leverage they have on the relations of the field. The boundaries of each field are determined by the limit to which the impact of the field's struggles can be felt, and agents from other fields can bring with them the capital and habitus acquired in another field (Warde, 2004:12). The ability of the capital and habitus from one field to enable an agent to go through the 'barriers of entry' (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1989:39) of another field, would indicate the extent to which the influence from of a field can stretch to another. This implies that the capital and habitus with which an agent enters a field would enable him/her to either modify the field's structure, or they would be modified by the field, depending on whether the agent occupies a higher or lower position of influence. What this means is that the actions of the agents of a particular field indeed shape the structure of that field, just as these actions are themselves constrained by the structure of the field. It is this dialectic relationship between structure and agency that forms the hallmark of Bourdieu's theory, and the reason for which I contend that the approach is suitable for analysing how translation agents are constrained by their social context, while they also contribute in shaping the social context through their actions.

In my application of the field concept to this study, I view translation as belonging to the literary field. This is because translation is a means by which publishers introduce foreign works to target audiences (Sapiro, 2008; Serry, 2002). This implies that the agents involved in the translation of literature are also situated in the literary fields in which cultural works are produced (Bourdieu, 2002). The agents involved in the translation of literary works range from the translator, the commissioner, the publisher, editors, the source text author, as well as the target text audience. These agents occupy different positions, which determine the role they play in the field. The amount of influence they further have on the activities of the field would also depend on the amount of leverage they can weigh in to influence the activities in order to gain or preserve their interest in the field. The author is, for instance, considered to be superior to the translator, but inferior to the publisher, who in turn may be inferior to

the readership, which is in turn subservient to institutional policies such as censorship. The relationship between these agents is one of power struggles, in which each of them consciously or unconsciously strives to dominate the field in order to foster their interests. The interest in this case may be material or symbolic in the sense that the agents may be striving for economic benefits or social or professional recognition. An author may be writing in order to get promotion or economic benefits, a translator may translate in order to promote a particular ideology, while a publisher may be in business for profit making or for ideological reasons.

A particular political system may set up publishing houses just for the promotion of works on its ideologies. Writing about the literary field, Africa, Currey (2008) highlights the fact that the literary field that emerged in Africa during the period prior to and after independence, publishers were interested in supplying the educational market, which had been hitherto dominated by Western works. Such was the case of the *African Writers Series (AWS)*, which was set up to produce books for the school curriculum in Africa. Its target market was the Anglophone countries of Africa and, as such, the translations they commissioned and published were from other languages into English. Their intention was to make economic profit from the lucrative market, and they therefore sought to publish works that would be acceptable to the readership or political institutions of the target countries. It is therefore my contention that the translation of Oyono's works was done within a particular field which was functioning according to particular norms, and whose activities were influenced by the relational network of the different agents involved in the field.

Bourdieu's model also indicates that a field may equally contain subfields which have boundaries separating them from other subfields of the same main field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:104). This implies that a field like 'religion' may contain subfields such as Christianity, Islam, or Judaism. With regard to translation, some scholars have questioned whether it constitutes an autonomous field or a subfield, given the fact that it plays a subservient and invisible role with regard to other fields (Sela-Sheffy, 2005; Simeoni, 1998). It is, however, my argument that translation can be both a field and a subfield. With regard to translation as a field, Hermans (2002:243) argues that:

when we use the term 'translation' or its counterpart in another language, it indicates a socially recognizable and recognized category, both a known concept and a socially acknowledged practice.

This clearly paints a picture of translation as an autonomous field, given that it has its own autonomous rules which are known by the agents of the practice, and there exist institutions to uphold and conserve those rules. In the same vein, Wolf (2007b) argues that because translation has rules that are respected by the professionals involved in the practice, it does indeed constitute a field. On the other hand, translation functions as a subfield when it is situated in a larger field. Taking the field of literary production, for instance, translated literature constitutes a subfield which can be differentiated from the subfield of original writings.

While I agree that translation can function as an autonomous field, it is my view that this is not easily applicable to the translation of literary works. This is because of the intricate link between the translation of literature and the general literary field, as well as the overlapping roles of the agents involved in literary translation. It is in this regard that for the context of this study, I consider translation as belonging to the general field of African literature in which the translations of *UVB* and *LVNM* were produced. This is because the translations by Oyono were commissioned and translated within the context of publishing literature written by Africans, and the translator himself was first a literary agent to whom translation was only a secondary activity. It is within this context that I analyse the translations of Oyono's novels within the field of African literature, the positions and role of the different agents involved, such as the author, publisher, and translator, and how these factors influenced the translator's decision-making during the process.

### **2.5.3 The notion of habitus**

The notion of habitus is intricately linked to that of field, and neither can be discussed without reference to the other. This is because the habitus is a product of the field, while the habitus of agents in itself conditions the nature of the field. Bourdieu (1977:72) defines habitus as:

systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of generation and structuring of practices and representations that can be objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without

being in any way the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor.

In this vein, habitus is the set of dispositions that are internalised in an individual or group of people operating in the same social space, and which guide an individual's principles of perception and response in the interaction with other agents of the field. This implies that the way we respond to situations, is conditioned by our internal dispositions, which shape our appreciation of life.

Bourdieu (1990:53) argues that habitus is a product of history, which deposits the lived experiences of an individual in their biological organisms, where they become instruments of “thought and action, and tend to guarantee the ‘correctness’ of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms”. What Bourdieu (1990:56) implies here is that the experiences of individuals are stored in their memory and subsequently influence their actions and perceptions at later stages in life. Habitus is thus internalised history which is acquired at two levels, the primary and the secondary. The primary level is during childhood, when an individual acquires a disposition from their immediate environment. A child would internalise his/her lived experiences from what is gathered from socialising experiences in the family and immediate environment.

The second level of habitus acquisition is done through education and later life experiences. What this implies is that our internal dispositions that condition the way we act and respond to situations is the product of our accumulated history from infancy to the moment of action or perception. Our taste, preferences, and assessment of what is right or wrong are more a result of unconscious behaviour coming from our internalisation of history than the result of calculated choices. Applying the habitus notion to translation studies would provide a tool with which to explain the causality of the strategies and preferences of the agents involved in the practice. For example, a translator may choose or refuse to translate a given text because it goes contrary to the ideological values of the translator; these ideological values are the product of the translator's lived experiences and education. The same applies to a commissioner or publisher who may make similar choices in relation to a work to be translated or published.

Regarding Reed's translation of Oyono's works, this study examines the extent to which Reed's habitus as a European, born and raised in the United Kingdom (UK), who later worked in Africa and became involved in the liberation struggle, could have influenced his interest in Oyono, whose works are a denunciation of the ills of colonialism. In the same way, the study examines how the habitus of James Currey, the publisher of the works, could have influenced his interest in African literature, leading to commissioning Reed to do the translations.

Another important element of habitus that Bourdieu (1990) extrapolates is that there is individual and shared habitus. Individual habitus is peculiar to an individual's lived experiences, while shared habitus is the internalised common history of a community or social class. This implies that people who share commonly lived experiences, such as siblings or a homogeneous community, tend to portray symmetrical patterns of behaviour. The fact that one sport is more popular in a particular country or community than another is because of the lived history of each of the countries or communities in relation to that sport. A literary work may be accepted or rejected by a particular community because the shared history has internalised common dispositions to assess what is good or bad.

In *Africa Writes Back*, James Currey (2008:61) reports that when the English translation of Mongo Beti's *Mission Terminée* (1957) was introduced into the school literature curriculum in East Africa in 1964, protests erupted not only because of the sexual scenes it contained, but especially because of its anti-clericalism. Most schools at the time were run by missionaries and the system had inculcated a clerical habitus in the people, which influenced their assessment of the morality of literature. This illustrates to what extent the collective habitus of the target system can influence the reception of a translation product and, by extension, the decision to translate or publish it. This study explores the extent to which the target audience could have played a role in Reed's translation of Oyono's works.

#### **2.5.4 The notion of capital**

Another concept used by Bourdieu (1986) to explain the functioning of the field is that of capital. He borrowed the term from the Marxist concept of capital, but expanded on it with the aim of showing that social struggles are more than just financial utility and economic capital (Joas & Knobl, 2013:15). This is also intricately linked to the field

and the habitus, and each of the concepts can only be fully understood with the incorporation of the other. Bourdieu (1986:241) defines capital as:

accumulated labor (in its materialized form or its 'incorporated,' embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor.

What this implies is that the agents involved in the field's activities possess a certain amount of resources or endowments, which enables them to participate in the activities, and this participation is also aimed at appropriating more resources that are at stake in the field. This capital includes, but is not limited to, the economic sense of material or monetary resources (Bourdieu 1986:241). It is a determining factor in the structuring of the field and the agents' habitus, given that it is what conditions the positioning of the agents in the field, as well as the goal for which the agents employ their dispositions to achieve.

Bourdieu (1986:243) distinguishes four convertible types of capital: economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital. Economic capital refers to the material assets and financial revenues of an agent, which can easily be converted into monetary form. It is an important driving force of the activities in the field. A writer may be in the business for financial benefits, just as a private publishing company for economic profit. Their interest would thus influence their activities in the field, as well as their interactions with other agents in the field. The establishment of European publishing houses in Africa in the period after World War II was to foster economic as well as cultural interests (Davis, 2013). This implies that their decision to select texts for publication was based on the extent to which those texts were aligned to their interests. Publishing houses therefore become a factor that constrains the actions of writers, as well as those of translators. It is in this regard that this study seeks to discover the interest that motivated the publisher's decision to commission and publish the translations of Oyono's novels. The study also looks at how financial benefits could have influenced the translator's decision to translate the works. According to Bourdieu (1986:17), cultural capital exists in three forms:

In the embodied state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.) ... and in the institutionalized state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of

educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee.

This implies that for the case of translation, the competencies of a translator, or a writer are acquired with time and they can be objectivised in the works they have produced, such as translated and published works. In the same way, the competencies acquired can be institutionalised by the award of academic qualifications as proof that those competencies have been acquired. For example, translator training institutions and certification bodies do accord institutionalised forms of cultural capital to professional translators.

Bourdieu (1986:243) also asserts that cultural capital can be converted to economic capital in certain conditions. This can be related to when a publisher pays a writer to write a literary work for publication, or when a writer earns money from the sales of his/her works. In the same light, when a translator is paid for his/her work, the cultural capital embodied in him/her is converted into economic capital. With regard to this study, I argue that John Reed had acquired a certain amount of cultural capital, which influenced the publisher to approach him for the translation of Oyono's works. With regard to social capital, Bourdieu (1986:248) defines it as:

the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word.

This implies that there are certain benefits that an individual can accumulate as a result of the people or institutions s/he is connected to, and the volume of the social capital possessed depends on the capital accumulated by the individual, as well as that accumulated by the people or institutions in his/her network (Bourdieu 1986:249). This social network can be in the form of a family name, a social class, a school, or a professional body. As such, a politician from a prominent family would have higher chances of being elected than one from a less known family. In the same way, a translator, writer or lawyer who belongs to a prominent professional body would be more likely solicited than one who belongs to a less prominent one. This is relevant to this study in that, based on his profile as an academic, a literary critique and a translator, I contend that John Reed was connected to a significant network of

people and institutions involved in the production and publication of African literature. The study thus examines how this might have been an influential factor in his translation of Oyono's works.

The final form of capital that Bourdieu (1989:17) talks about is symbolic capital. This is not an independent form of capital, but rather "the form that various species of capital assume when they are perceived and recognised as legitimate". It is thus accumulated based on the recognition that the other agents of the field accord to the other accumulated forms of capital possessed by an individual or institution. In other words, a millionaire is accorded high societal status because the field acknowledges the fact that wealth is important and worth acquiring. In the same way, the status of an intellectual or prominent writer is the result of the society's recognition of the importance of the cultural capital they have accumulated. This is equally the case with a publishing house which is accorded a particular status based on the amount and nature of works it has published.

The English translation of Mongo Beti's *Mission Terminée* was little known when published, but when the AWS published it in 1964, it sold far more than the French original (Currey, 2008:61). This was as result of the prominence the AWS had gained, thus its symbolic capital. In the case of translation, a translator may acquire symbolic capital as result of the amount of his/her translations that have been published, or the academic qualification s/he possesses. This is relevant to the subject of this study in that the translations of Oyono's works were not the first works John Reed had translated with regard to African literature, and this study examines the role of the status he had acquired might have played in the publisher commissioning him to do the translations.

In conclusion, Bourdieu's social theory demonstrates that social actions are the results of the following factors: the social space within which the action takes place, the different agents in the social space, the positions occupied by the different agents, the dispositions of the agents, the resources accumulated by the agents, and the interest at stake in the social space. The implication of this to the notion of agency is that, rather than being an oppositional relationship between the agents and the structure, agency operates in a dialectic relationship between the agents and their social contexts. It is this view that I adopt in the current study to contend that translation agency is more complex than the binary opposition in which the agent

acts against the rules of the field; it rather has to do with the way translation agents construct and are constructed by the contexts within which they operate. It is in this regard that the study looks at the relationship between Reed and his context, and how the context constrained his actions in the translation of Oyono's *UVB* and *LVNM*. The study also looks at how Reed's actions contributed in shaping the literary field within which he worked.

### **2.5.5 Criticisms of Bourdieu's theory**

Despite the appeal of Bourdieu's theory, there have been some criticisms about his works. One of the most prominent critics of Bourdieu has been Bernard Lahire (2003), who criticised Bourdieu's theory for lacking in detail. On the concept of the field, he asserts that Bourdieu's conceptualisation is too limited to explain the rather broad framework within which agents operate. He questions Bourdieu's assertion that the field is autonomous and argues that Bourdieu fails to indicate what constitutes the boundary of one field from another, especially given the fact that most fields are actually heterogeneous in nature (Lahire & Wells, 2010:447). He further asserts that Bourdieu ignores the fact that some agents might belong to more than one field at the same time, and their activities in one field might have an impact on their actions in the other field (Lahire & Wells, 2010:446). He links this to the notion of capital to say that contrary to Bourdieu's claim of capital being accumulated from the field, the capital possessed by some agents in the field is actually accumulated from another field to which they belong (Lahire & Wells, 2010:448).

Regarding the notion of habitus, Lahire (2003:334) argues that Bourdieu's conceptualisation is flawed in the sense that it does not explain the manner by which the lived experiences of an individual are internalised in that individual. He further asserts that Bourdieu seems to suggest that the lived experiences of an individual are internalised in that individual as a homogeneous unit of dispositions that determines the individual's actions. He disagrees with this and argues that the habitus is rather heterogeneous in nature, given the fact that individuals are exposed to different, and, at times, contradictory experiences which are all internalised and condition the individual to act or react differently in different situations (Lahire & Wells, 2010:448). I disagree with Lahire's criticism that Bourdieu ignores the possibility of agents belonging to more than one field.

Bourdieu's view that agents enter a field based on whether they possess the necessary capital and habitus to be effective in the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:107) indicates that this capital and habitus must have been acquired in another field. This therefore does not exclude the possibility of the agents belonging to more than one field. In this light, an academic who is also a writer may simultaneously belong to the fields of education and literature.

With regard to the criticism on Bourdieu's concept of habitus, I also disagree with Lahire that Bourdieu ignores the heterogeneity of the habitus. While Bourdieu does not expressly say that the habitus is heterogeneous, it is my view that when he talks of the cognitive and motivating structures that make up the habitus (Bourdieu, 1977:78), he is implying that the habitus is like a black box into which different experiences fit in as mechanisms that influence different actions and perceptions in given situations. The heterogeneity of the habitus is therefore implied in Bourdieu's conceptualisation. Furthermore, it is my argument that while Lahire disagrees with Bourdieu on specifics, he does not deny the existence of the field, in which there are agents who occupy positions and possess capital that determine their actions. Neither does he deny the fact that the habitus is a causal factor of the actions of an individual. I therefore maintain the argument that Bourdieu's theory is an important framework that allows us to understand the social factors that influence the actions of agents involved in translation activities.

King (2000:421) has also criticised Bourdieu's notion of field as undermining the agency of individuals, given that individuals are constrained by their social relations, which limits their ability to act beyond the limits of what is permissible within the network of relations. He also asserts that Bourdieu's notion of habitus is indicative of the fact that agents do not have any free will to act and are instead constrained by social forces. He argues that this notion makes agents' actions to be deterministic in nature, thereby taking Bourdieu back to the objectivism *versus* subjectivism problem, which he claims to resolve with this notion.

Jenkins (1982:273) has further criticised Bourdieu's starting off with a rejection of determinism, just to end up in it with his concept of habitus. He argues that the concept lacks clarity, especially with regard to the relationship between the field and the habitus. With regard to the criticisms by King and Jenkin, I argue that Bourdieu's conceptualisation of the field and the habitus clearly indicates that, while agents'

actions are constrained by the nature of the field and their habitus, this does not curtail rational choices on the part of the agents (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:126).

Bourdieu (1989:45) resolves the misconception that the habitus is contrary to rational choice by asserting that the habitus determines both the unconscious and rational choices of agents because all rational choices on the part of individual agents are based on principles which are still influenced by their habitus. This implies that the principle of reasoning that leads an individual to make the choice to conform to or ignore the constraining norms of a society, is based on the disposition of free will that the individual has acquired over a given period.

Based on my views regarding the criticisms of Bourdieu's theory, I contend that the theory is an appropriate tool that will enable me to achieve the aim of this study. This is based on the fact that there is a field in which the translations of Oyono's novels were produced, there are clearly identified agents in different positions in the said field, each endowed with different forms of capital and there is the individual habitus of the agents and the collective habitus of the literary field that influence the actions of the agents involved in the translations of the two novels under study. Furthermore, I opt for Bourdieu's theory because it has been widely used in translation studies (Gouanvic, 2005; Hanna, 2016; Inghilleri, 2005; Liu, 2012; Simeoni, 1998; Wolf, 2007b), which is evidence that it has been tested and proven to be a useful tool in translation analysis.

#### **2.5.6 Bourdieu's model in translation studies**

Bourdieu's theory has been applied to translation studies to show the relationship between translation agents and their social contexts. Such an approach views translation as an activity in which the translator is not just a marginalised neutral actor, but an active agent who shapes and is shaped by the context in which s/he operates.

In this light, Gouanvic (2005; 2010) argues that Bourdieu's social theory is very significant when applied to translation analysis. Taking the case of literature, he argues that Bourdieu's notion of field applies to the context of production of a translation, in which the literary field is made up of literary traditions of a society, the publication policies, the readership culture, and the norms or laws governing literary production. Through an investigation of the French translations of American literary

works in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Gouanvic (2005:154) claims that the production of original and translated literature in France was clearly subject to the dictates of politics in the former century, than the latter, because the French literary field had not developed into the same level of autonomy in the nineteenth century as in the twentieth. He further argues that in the interwar years, the French literary field was more resistant to political constraints than the American system, thereby compelling some American authors to emigrate to France to have their works translated and published (Gouanvic, 2005:153). Gouanvic's argument is significant in that it highlights the extent to which social factors, which are situated at the macro-textual level, are influential in the production of literary works and their translation. It underscores the fact that some works may be more susceptible to selection for translation than others because of the social factors prevalent in the particular field.

This is relevant to the current study in that it looks at the factors that led to the decision to translate Oyono's novels into English. Gouanvic (2005:157) also looks at Bourdieu's concept of habitus and argues that the choices of translators can better be explained by looking at their habitus instead of the norms of the literary system, because norms cannot explain the spontaneous or unconscious actions taken by translators. Using the example of three different translators of American literature into French, he argues that the difference in the habitus of the translators led them to having different literary preferences, and this was influential in the texts that were selected for translation, as well as the translation strategies they adopted. This implies that the translators contribute in shaping the target literary field selecting texts that are introduced to the target field through translation (Milton & Bandia, 2009:1) and their habitus is a determining factor in this regard.

Inghilleri (2005) asserts that Bourdieu's theory has been applied to translation to put more focus on the translators themselves, and their roles as social and cultural agents who are actively involved in the production of textual and discursive practices. She also argues that the relevance of Bourdieu's social theory to translation studies is that it has led to a "sociological approach to the discipline which encourages an interest in the role of agents of institutions involved in translation activity" (Inghilleri, 2005:126). Furthermore, she highlights the fact that Bourdieu's theory has contributed in the theorisation of translation studies in a way that calls for the analysis of the product along the lines of social practices and relevant fields in which they are

constituted, that they be viewed as functions of social relations based on competing forms of capital tied to local/global relations of power, and that translators and interpreters be seen as both implicated in and able to transform the forms of practice in which they engage. In it is this regard that this study examines the role of the various agents involved in the translation of Oyono's novels, and how their interactions influenced the translator's choices and strategies.

In the same vein, Wolf (2007b) argues that adopting Bourdieu's model in translation analysis provides a deeper understanding of the socially regulated nature of the translation process, and the social responsibility of translation. Based on an overview of the application of Bourdieu's theory translation studies, she asserts that the model is relevant as it highlights the agents in the production and reception of translated works, as well as their role in shaping the power relations that are inherent in translation activities. According to her, the factors that influence the production of a translation are "socially driven and re-organised within networks that condition the very specific interplay of the different mediating agencies." (Wolf, 2007:140). Wolf's opinion is relevant to the understanding of the agency role of the translator and other actors involved in the translation process, and this relate to the subject of this study, which seeks to explore the role of the translator as an agent and the factors that influence his agency.

Hanna (2016) has applied Bourdieu's sociological model to investigate the sociocultural dynamics of the production, dissemination, and consumption of the Arabic translations of Shakespearean tragedies in Egypt. He argues that Bourdieu's theory enables us to situate translation action within the context of the interplay involving different social forces that constrain the selection of texts for translation and the actual decisions taken by translators at micro-textual level (Hanna, 2016:201). Using two different modes of drama production, he contends that the social construction of theatre in Egypt influences the actions of the agents of its production and translation. Hanna (2016:12) identifies two modes of drama productions which are heteronomous and autonomous and claims that while heteronomous drama conforms to the expectations and needs of the wider general audiences, autonomous drama appeals more to the elite sectors of theatre consumers as well as readers of published drama translations. This has direct implications on the translation strategies in that the translators will be less constrained by the linguistic and

aesthetic aspects of the texts if it is destined for heteronomous production, and more constrained when it comes to autonomous production.

Hanna's views are significant in that they highlight the role of target audience literary preferences in influencing translation decisions both at macro-textual and micro-textual levels. What this means is that the expectations, or norms, of a literary field are a constraining factor that shapes the actions of the agents involved in the translation of works in the said field. It is, however, my contention that the literary preferences of an audience are themselves shaped by the literary works which are produced by the agents of the field, including authors, publishers, and translators. The field and its agents are thus in a dialectic relationship in which the agents construct, and are constructed, by the field. It is in this regard that the current study looks at the relationship between the literary field and the agents involved in the translation of Oyono's *UVB* and *LVNM*.

Jinyu Liu (2012) highlights the fact that the application of Bourdieu's theory to translation studies would underscore the central role of translators in the translation process. He argues that the translator's habitus is acquired through an internalised social and cultural history, and it influences the activities of the translator in relation to the forces of the field of translation. Using the case of Yan Fu, and how his translations helped in the enlightenment of the Chinese people, he demonstrates how the application of Bourdieu's model to translation analysis can place the activities of the translator in a social context, and highlight the fact that an analysis of a translator's habitus can explain how the choices made during the translation process are not always conscious strategies, but the effect of a specific internalised identity. What is significant in Liu's study is that it highlights the role of the translator in constructing the target field through his/her translation choices. Yan Fu contributed in shaping the cultural taste of the Chinese through the introduction of Western ideas and lifestyles that were contained in the works he translated. He was influenced in doing this by his habitus which he had acquired through his experiences in the evolution of Chinese society. This implies that he was a constructed and constructing agent of the field in which he operated. It is in this regard that I contend that translation agency operates in a dialectic link between the agents and their social contexts.

Garcés and Blasi (2010) attempt to link Bourdieu's model to translation analysis by asserting that translation is situated within the context of a field of different agents, and it is the translator's habitus that enables him or her to act in a particular manner in relation to the other agents. Focusing on public service interpreting and translation, they argue that the translator's adherence or divergence to translational norms is dependent on the habitus of the individual translator. The significance of this assertion is in the fact that the decisions taking during the translational negotiation process, be they conscious or unconscious, are always influenced not only by the translators' habitus, but also by his or her relationship with the other agents of the translational field, whose activities are also the result of their habitus.

Vosloo (2007) demonstrates that an application of Bourdieu's ideas to translation studies can highlight the fact that while a translator's actions are influenced by his/her habitus, such action is also facilitated or constrained by the prevailing translational field. Focusing on the case of Antjie Krog as a translator, argues that the translator's actions are regulated through schemes which are the result of social and cultural internalisation, and which influence the various choices the translator makes in order to achieve his or her goal. Such schemes, or habitus, function on "different levels in differing social, cultural, ideological, and personal spaces" (Vosloo, 2007:87). Her argument is significant in that it underscores the role of the field and the habitus in influencing translation action, which is relevant to this study as it examines the role of the literary field and the translator's habitus in determining translation decisions.

Liang (2010) uses Bourdieusian social theory to explain the individual and collective practices found in the literary field of fantasy fiction translation in Taiwan. She argues that unlike the poly-system model, which recognises the social nature of the translation practice, but overlooks the roles of the individuals involved in the practice, Bourdieu's model highlights the role of these individuals by taking into account "the personalised social and cultural history of translation agents and leads to a better understanding of the tension behind individual choices made during the translation process" (Liang, 2010:40). This is significant in that in as much as translation is situated within a system of production whose functioning is determined by the various forces involved, the translator is himself or herself an important agent whose role is to blend the forces into a single unit of production.

## 2.6 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to present a framework for the conceptualisation of agency from a Bourdieusian perspective. My argument is that decisions made through the course of translation activities are influenced by social forces, thereby requiring a sociological approach to unearth these social factors which foreground translation actions. In this regard, I have presented a historical overview of translation studies leading to the advent of the sociological turns in the discipline. The purpose has been to illustrate that the application of sociological theories to translation studies does not appear in a vacuum but is the result of the different shifting turns that have marked the evolution of the discipline. I have then elaborated on Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus, and capital, followed by how they have influenced current research in translation studies. The aim has been to show that translation agency operates in a dialectic relationship between translation agents and their social contexts, in which the agents construct, and are constructed, by the contexts. Translation activities can therefore be explained by analysing the field in which the translation takes place, the agents involved and the forces they possess, as well as the nature of the interplay that takes place between the agents and the context and how this impact on the translator's behaviour during the translation process. This has provided a framework within which I conceptualise agency as a theory in translation studies and how it can be applied in the analysis of John Reed's translation of Ferdinand Oyono's *UVB* and *LVNM*, which will be the focus of the next chapter.

## **AGENCY IN TRANSLATING AFRICAN LITERATURE IN EUROPEAN LANGUAGES**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I argued for a sociological approach to the study of translation studies. I began by presenting an overview of the trends in translation studies leading up to the sociological turn of the discipline. This was to show that the sociological approach to translation studies emanated from the different shifting turns that have marked the evolution of the discipline. I then argued for a Bourdieusian model in the analysis of a translation process and demonstrated that this approach is appropriate because it provides a good framework within which to understand how the different agents involved in the translation process construct, and are constructed, by the social contexts within which they operate. It is this focus on the agents of translation that has given rise to the concept of agency in translation studies. In this chapter, I intend to critically examine the notion of agency as it has been applied to translation studies, and its relevance to the translation of African literature, in general, and the novels of Ferdinand Oyono, in particular. This will enable me to explain the agency role of John Reed in his translations of *UVB* and *LVNM*.

### **3.2 Conceptualising agency**

The concept of agency in translation studies can be traced back to the works of Eugene Nida (1952) on Bible translation, the descriptive approaches of Even-Zohar (1978) and Gideon Toury (1995), and the cultural approach of André Lefevere (1992). Translation agency in these cases focused on the role that translation plays in its receiving culture and the systemic factors controlling the practice of translation.

With translation studies going social as result of the broadening perspectives ushered in by system-oriented and cultural approaches, the concept of agency began to attract more attention in studies of translation phenomena (Wolf, 2007b). In recent years, the concept has increasingly become a central theme in translation studies, with scholars focusing more on how translation agents construct, and are constructed, by their social contexts (Baker, 2007; Khalifa, 2014; Koskinen, 2010;

Marais, 2014; Milton & Bandia, 2009; Pym, 1998; Tymoczko, 2010; Wolf, 2006). However, while many translation scholars have demonstrated how the notion of agency plays out in translation, the concept remains a slippery one about which there seems not to be an agreement of what it is or what constitutes it (Khalifa, 2014:13).

Milton and Bandia (2009), for example, have demonstrated how translation agents are making decisions that are impacting on the cultural and literary systems of receiving cultures. They however do not expand much on the notion of agency as their approach mainly focuses on the agency role of translation, in contrast to 'translators', in changing cultural and linguistic policies and practices (Milton and Bandia, 2009:1). In the same way, Baker (2006), Pym (1998), Tymoczko (2010) and Wolf (2007b) have all demonstrated that agency is imbedded in translation and should constitute a framework for translation analysis, without giving much detail as to what agency is nor who is an agent. Kinnunen and Koskinen (2010:6) have attempted to fill this gap in the agency debate by proposing what they consider agency to mean, namely "the ability and willingness to act". They explain that willingness refers to the internal state and disposition of an agent, while ability refers to the constraints within which an agent is required to make a choice.

Finally, acting relates to exerting an influence on an activity or someone. This conceptualisation of agency is significant in that it touches on the social context of agency as well as its intentionality. This is expressed in their use of the words 'ability' which has social implications as it involves the power relations between the individual and the structure, and 'willingness' which relates to conscious reflexivity and intentionality of action implications (Kinnunen and Koskinen, 2010:6). While agreeing with Khalifa (2014) that their conceptualisation is quite comprehensive, it is my view that it shows the binary opposition between agency and structure in which the individual acts in opposition to the structure, rather than their interdependence. It is thus my argument that for agency to have its full value as a theory in translation studies, there need to be more detailed studies focusing on the mutually influential, causal relationship between the social environment of translations and the actions of the agents involved.

For this study, I conceptualise agency in line with Bourdieu's relational model which highlights the dialectic relationship between agency and structure. Bourdieu's theory seeks to overcome the binary opposition between objectivism and

subjectivism, or structure and agency, by demonstrating that the two are interdependent (Bourdieu, 1977:4). He explains this through his notions of 'field' and 'habitus', in which the constraints of the field shape the actions of the agent, while the actions of the agents also contribute in constructing the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1989:40). It is in line with this reasoning that I view agency not in terms of the binary opposition between the subjective agent and the structural constraints, but in terms of a dialectic relationship between the agent and the structure. I therefore argue that there is an interdependent relationship between the social and the individual agent, given that individual actions are determined by social constraints, which are themselves shaped by individual actions. It is in this light that I argue with Wolf (2007b:132) that translation agency has to do with how the social constructs the agent and is constructed by the actions of the latter.

Drawing on this assessment, I perceive agency in translation studies to be a theoretical framework which studies translation by analysing the social context of a translation activity and how this influences the actions of the agents involved in the process, and the impact of the agents' decisions and actions on the social environment of the translation product. This dialectic influence between the social context within which the translation agents operate and the actions of the said agents are in line with Bourdieu's dialectic relationship between the field and the agents, and it underscores the mutually influential relationship between the social context and the actions of agents at the macro-level and textual level of translation phenomena. In other words, the context of a translation activity affects what happens at the macro-textual and the textual levels, which in turn also have an impact in shaping the same context of the translation phenomenon.

This is the position I adopt in this study, and I will thus be looking at the role of John Reed as an agent, his position in the relevant literary field, his relationship with other agents of the field such as the publisher, and how these factors – which are social in nature – influenced his decisions and actions, as well as the impact of these decisions and actions on the translations of Oyono's *UVB* and *LVNM*.

### **3.3 Agency in translation studies**

In this section, I look at how the concept of agency has been applied to translation studies. I analyse agency at both macro-textual and textual levels. I therefore look at

the social factors that influence the decisions or actions that are taken prior to the translation of the texts, as well as those taken at the textual level, and the impact of these decisions or actions in shaping the literary field. This offers me a context within which to explore the dialectic relationship between the social context of the translation of Oyono's *UVB* and *LVNM*, and the actions taken at both macro-textual and textual levels of the translation process.

Milton and Bandia (2009:3) assert that translation operates within the context of cultural conflict in which Western cultures are dominating minority cultures. They argue that, in this context, translators from minority cultures become agents of resistance and identity creation who are using translation to enable their dominated cultures to resist. These translators adopt linguistic strategies that enable them to assert their cultural identities by subverting the dominant global languages into which they translate.

The implications of Milton and Bandia's argument are that translators' actions at textual level are influenced by the broader social context which is characterised by the conflict between dominant and dominated cultures. It is this social environment that influences the choices that the translators make during the translation process, which in turn contributes in shaping the social context of the receiving culture through the valorisation of the identities of the dominated cultures. The agency of the translators in this case is thus relational as it is determined by the social contexts in which the translators find themselves and thus impacts on the receiving environments by exposing them to particular cultural identities.

Venuti (2012, 2013) adopts a more activist stance to this view. He asserts that translation is carried within a social context marked by linguistic and cultural conflicts, which influence translation decisions from text selection to transfer strategies. Venuti's argument comes from his desire for translation to serve as a resistant tool to the English domination of minority cultures. He advocates that translators assert their agency by choosing texts and strategies that would give them increased visibility and enable them to shape the way translation is perceived. Such visibility, according to him would come from adopting foreignising translation strategies that would enable the translations to impose themselves on the dominant target cultures and alter the way cultural hierarchies unfold in the field of translation (Venuti, 2012:1). The implication of Venuti's argument is that translators can change the general perception

of translation as a subordinate entity, not only by adopting certain strategies, but also by actively choosing the texts to translate, as well as the language combinations. This means that translators need to be cognisant of the social contexts within which they operate and contribute, through their actions, to shape the ideological hierarchies of the field of operation. He further argues that the actions of translators in this regard will contribute in shaping perceptions around the notions of culture and translation, also highlighting the sociological hierarchies in the relationship between cultures and languages.

Venuti's view seems to suggest that translators have a fair amount of free will, which they can exercise as they wish in order to achieve certain aims. I believe that his views are based on his personal experiences as an American theorist and translator working in a context in which there is economic security, and the languages and cultures involved are globalised European languages (Tymoczko, 2000:39). His argument may therefore not be applicable to the context of other regions of the world, such as Africa, where the countries have less economic power and the language cultures do not have the same levels of visibility as global or Western languages. It is thus my contention that Venuti's argument ignores the fact that translators' agency is constrained or facilitated by social factors, be they human or institutional. The ability of translators or other agents to exercise the powers he claims they possess depends on the social factors constraining the translators' actions. His views are, however, valuable in that they underscore the impact of translations in constructing the social, especially with regard to shaping the narrative of translation and its role in valorising minority cultures.

Venuti (2013:182) further shows the impact of the social on the translation process by arguing that the translator's interpretation of the source text is always influenced by the social environment in which s/he is affiliated. In other words, during the translation process, the social comes out from within the individual (Tyulenev, 2014:8) to influence whatever action or decision is taken. This is synonymous with Bourdieu's (1990:54) argument that agents' actions are determined by the habitus, which is the social that has been deposited in the biological individual to constitute the mechanisms of perception and action. Translation actions are thus influenced by the social context that constructs the agents involved, and who also contribute in constructing the same social context by their actions. Venuti's argument is relevant to

the context of African literature in European languages, in which resistance to European cultural domination is one of the prevalent themes (Bandia, 2008), thereby having significant implications for the translation strategies of translators of such literary texts. This is the nature of Ferdinand Oyono's texts, and this study explores the strategies that Reed adopts in the translations and the social factors that influence his choice of the said strategies.

Another scholar who adopts an activist stance in the agency of the translator is Mona Baker (2006, 2010), who asserts that translation is involved in the never-ending global ideological and military conflicts, which are fuelled by narratives that uphold or undermine the ideologies underpinning the conflicts. She argues that translational actions are influenced by this social context of conflicts, and decisions made by the translators reflect their dissociation or empathy with one narrative position or another (Baker, 2006:105). She defines narratives as "public and personal stories that we subscribe to and that guide our behaviour" and argues that they are bound to influence the translator's interpretation of the utterances s/he has to deal with (Baker, 2010:25). Baker's narrative concept has significant implications for agency. Her claim of the translator's perceptions being shaped by narratives and the translator's actions contributing in shaping narratives demonstrates the relational nature of how the social constructs the agent and *vice versa*.

This is synonymous with Bourdieu's view of the social field constructing agents' habitus, and also being constructed by the latter. What this implies is that agents who come from different social backgrounds would have different perceptions and act differently because their senses of perception and action, or habitus, have been shaped by different narratives. Another significant aspect of Baker's argument is the fact that she highlighted the explicit or conscious agency of the translator. In other words, translators consciously contribute in resisting or elaborating selected narratives, and one way of doing this, according to Baker (2006:105), is through framing, which she defined as "an active strategy that implies agency and by means of which we consciously participate in the construction of reality". This process of framing works by drawing on:

practically any linguistic or non-linguistic resource, from paralinguistic devices such as intonation and typography to visual resources such as colour and image, to

numerous linguistic devices such as tense shifts, deixis, code switching, use of euphemism, and many more (Baker, 2006:111).

The point worth noting in Baker's notion of framing is that it offers another strategy with which the translator can assert his/her agency. In other words, the translator can limit the intervention at textual level, and use paratextual framing to mark his/her agency position. Hermans (2007:55) also takes up this argument by asserting that the translator can use paratextual or paralinguistic frames to either dissociate or associate himself/herself from the author's ideology.

In recent years, Baker has drifted from a descriptive position on agency toward that of activism as she advocates that the translator needs to be conscious of the powers they wield and define their own place in global conflicts. She thus sends out a rallying call to translators and interpreters to "volunteer their time, to invest emotionally and intellectually in projects designed to undermine dominant discourses and to elaborate more equitable and peaceful narratives of the future" (Baker, 2010:34). This implies that translators have a moral responsibility to resist the ideologies that are inflaming conflicts around the world, by initiating, accepting, or rejecting assignments. This raises the issue of the leverage that translators hold in the power relations underpinning translation activities. The linguistic assets of translators make them valuable bridges of communication and, at times, the only access route that the target audience has to the source text. Refusal to translate may thus block that access and confine the source text narrative to its immediate world.

Initiation is also important in the sense that the initiator plays a more determining role in decision-making relating to the translation; as such, the translator's agency role is further enhanced when s/he initiates the project. Although Baker throws light on the agency of translators in the context of global conflicts, it is my view that her claim of the powers that translators wield is exaggerated. The translator's free will can only go as far as the constraints of his/her social environment allows. A translator working in North Korea would not be able to exercise the same free will in decision-making as one working in Europe. In the same way, a translator working in Africa whose main priority is to provide for his/her family, would not have the luxury to be actively involved in ideological conflicts. It would therefore be beneficial for translation studies to go beyond the "Western analysis of reality" (Marais, 2014:144) and look at

the agency implications in what translators are doing in different contexts of the world.

Gentzler and Tymoczko (2002) also take an activist stance in their conceptualisation of the agency of translators. They argue that translators are actively involved in the selection of texts to translate, as well as strategies of translation. Their intention in this case is to demonstrate that there are always dimensions of power inherent in the relationship between the translator, the commissioner, the author, as well as the source and target texts. They assert that translation is not merely a faithful reproduction of the original, but rather:

a deliberate and conscious act of selection, assemblage, structuration – and even in some cases, of falsification, refusal of information, counterfeiting, and the creation of secret codes. In this way, translators, as much as creative writers and politicians, participate in the powerful acts that create knowledge and shape cultures. (Gentzler & Tymoczko, 2002: xxi).

Two major things stand out in this argument: the idea of falsifying, refusing, and counterfeiting information; and the idea of comparing translators to creative writers and politicians. The first case is of great significance because the argument seems to suggest that translators can indeed withhold information or misinform the target audience. This argument raises ethical issues, but my question is whether translators can appropriate all the powers alluded to if their environment of operation does not allow it. Can the translator's leverage in text selection in a particular social context be transferred to another context? It is thus my view, that while translators do indeed possess the ability to participate in a more active way in macro-level translation decisions, this invariably depends on factors in the specific context that would either facilitate or constrain the extent to which this power can be exerted. This implies that the actions of the translator or the other agents involved in the process are constrained by the specific field in which they operate. In the same way, the textual level actions of the translator result in shaping the perceptions and preferences of the recipients, and this contributes in determining the pre-textual dynamics of the translation process, since taste or preference determines production (Bourdieu 1993:51).

In other studies, Tymoczko (2007, 2009) also advocates for an enlargement of the borders of translation studies, to liberate the discipline from the dominance of

Eurocentric models. She argues that Eurocentrism has stifled the translator's agency by defining translation as just a transfer process. She asserts that this conceptualisation places a lot of control on the message, and an incorporation of other models of translation would help break the chains of control around the source text message. The reason for this is that "exposure to other models of translation helps translators develop self-reflexivity, which is essential for empowerment and the exercise of ethical agency" (Tymoczko, 2009:414). The value of Tymoczko's argument lies in the fact that she advocates for a broader approach to translation studies, which in turn may reveal different contexts, texts and agents involved in translation activities beyond Western frontiers. This would provide a better understanding of the social factors underpinning the actions of translators and the impact their actions are having in the communities in which they operate. She therefore conceptualises agency as having to do with the empowerment of translators to act as agents of both resistance and construction of cultural and ideological identities. Using the case of the translation of Irish literature, she argues that Irish translators resorted to strategies of textual manipulation in order to resist the cultural and ideological perceptions that had been constructed by British colonial discourse. The translators in this way became empowered agents of social change by engaging in the "radical manipulation of texts, constructing cultural images and identities, fostering self-definition, and creating knowledge through their work" (Tymoczko, 2007:200). Her views underscore the causal link between the sociocultural factors of the translator's context of operation and the actions or decisions s/he takes in the translation process. They also highlight the impact of the translator's actions in shaping cultural and ideological perceptions in the target system. This shows the mutually influential relationship between the translator's actions and the context within which s/he works.

It is in this regard that I argue that translation agency is context specific as different translation contexts are bound to have different social factors underpinning the actions of the agents involved in the process. In this regard, a study of the translation of Oyono's novels, which brings together a European translator and an African text of a peculiar nature, would likely reveal interesting agency relations that would contribute to the conceptualisation of translation studies.

Marais (2008, 2014) has also made a significant contribution to the notion of agency in translation studies. He upholds the view that the neutrality of translators is illusory, and that translators' individualities always lead to biased interventions on their parts in translation activities (Marais, 2008). Marais (2014), however, laments the fact that the agency debate, as it has been carried out by scholars, has been reductionist in nature, drawing mostly from Western critical theory. He thus argues that a more complex approach is needed for translation studies to investigate other areas of agency which have been neglected by the Western underpinnings of the discourse on agency (Marais, 2014). In other words, like Tymoczko (2007) has argued for the enlargement of translation studies, Marais is arguing for an enlargement of the theorisation of agency. His contention is that Western notions should not be the only lenses through which to perceive the agency of translators, because there are other domains of less visibility, but in which translators are also making significant impact on societies (Marais, 2014:144). The implication of Marais' argument is that while translation studies is fighting to free itself from the cage of invisibility, it risks creating an asymmetrical situation in which the rays of visibility would shine on some areas and be cut off from others. Marais uses the case of the informal economy in South Africa as an example, arguing that translators are playing a significant role in advancing the development agenda in the informal sector of multilingual communities. Marais' argument is relevant to translation studies in Africa because the continent is predominantly informal, and the communities are characterised by dense multilingualism. Translation and translators are thus important assets that facilitate trade, governance, and service delivery in the communities.

The peculiar social context within which African translators work, means that the social factors that influence their work are different from what prevails outside the continent. Translation agency in this case is thus bound to be different because the causal and intended factors are different. This is relevant to the present study in that the texts involved in the study emerged from an African context, where literary texts have been said to be more hybrid in nature (Bandia, 2008:114) and thus different from the typically homogeneous texts that have informed Western notions of translation.

Munday (2012), on his part, has argued that translators are not mere neutral conduits of source text messages for they make intervening decisions during the translation process which cause them to be biased, either towards the source text or the target text. Translators are therefore interested participants whose actions are “constrained and directed by extratextual factors” (Munday, 2012:2). Munday’s contention is that the social is always present in the decisions that translators make at the textual level. Unlike the more activist stance adopted by some translation studies scholars (Baker, 2010; Tymoczko, 2007), he argues that translation decisions are constrained by extratextual factors, which to me are social in nature. The translator’s free will or that of other agents depends on the extent to which it is facilitated or limited by the social environment within which the action takes place. The notion of the ‘interested representer’ (Munday, 2012:2) is also significant in the sense that it highlights the importance of ‘purpose’ in the conceptualisation of agency. This is in line with Bourdieu’s view that the actions of agents are motivated by the interest that they seek to accumulate in the field (Bourdieu, 1986).

Although Munday’s concept of interest is not expressed in the same economic terms as that of Bourdieu, it underscores the fact that agents do not act for the sake of action for there is always a goal that motivates the action. The relevance of Munday’s argument is that it creates a causality link between the translator’s social environment and the decisions s/he makes at the textual level. These decisions may range from choosing a specific word as opposed to another in deciding to add or leave out a segment of the text. This implies that different translators who translate the same text would most likely make different intervening decisions based on their different social backgrounds. In other words, the different habitus and social positions of translators enable them to intervene in a specific way to shape the translation product. This is significant to this study in the sense that it is my argument that Reed’s habitus was a determining influence in the translation decisions he made in translating the works of Oyono.

Another scholar who has applied agency at the translation process level is Hermans (2007), who asserts that translators are never neutral, given that translations will always have the subjected positions of the translators inscribed in the choices they make at the textual level of translation. According to him,

[t]he translating subject cannot be elided or eliminated from translations because, as a form of text-production, translating requires the deployment of linguistic means in the host language, and this will involve dimensions other than those of the original. As a result, the translator's utterances are necessarily marked, revealing a discursively positioned subject (Hermans, 2007:28).

This implies that a source text translated by different translators would produce different target texts, and such differences would be as a result of the different linguistic choices or preferences that the different translators would have made. As such, faced with different options, a translator would opt for particular intervention preferences to resolve textual challenges during translation, which implies agency on the part of the translator. Hermans (2007) further argues that translators also intervene to mark their visibility in translations through annotations. This meta-discursive approach enables the intervening agent to impose his/her presence throughout the translation because:

By adopting a position vis-à-vis that body of translations the translator marks not only a discursive presence but also a critical viewpoint. And since translations necessarily contain these positionings, they speak about themselves, with more or less emphasis (Hermans, 2007:51).

The significance of Hermans' argument lies in the highlight he places on the subjective position of the translator that renders his/her presumed neutrality an illusion. I contend that such subjectivity is determined by the translator's habitus, which has been constructed by his/her social environment. I therefore argue that the translator's interpretation and perception of situations are informed by his/her socio-cultural and professional background and it would be beneficial for translation analysis to focus on the causal relationship between the said background and the choices made by the translator during the translation process. It is in this regard that the present study explores those social factors that make up Reed's background and their influence on his translations of Oyono's works.

Tyulenev (2014:6) also weighs in on the intervention debate by asserting that translators are mediators whose works always "bear an imprint of their socialisation, sometimes invisible even to translators themselves". This, according to him, is as a result of the fact that translators are first and foremost individuals whose individualities have been shaped by their historical social experiences. These

experiences, or habitus, tend to influence the decisions made by the translators, since “every translation decision is always an interface between the translator’s own individuality and the society of which s/he is a part” (Tyulenev, 2014:11). He thus argues that, in order to understand the causal forces of translation decision, there needs to be a meticulous analysis that takes into account the social context within which the translator works. Tyulenev’s argument underscores the fact that the translator’s habitus is a major causal factor of the conscious and subconscious decisions made during the translation process. Another significant point to his argument is that he advocates for an analysis of the translational context in order to understand translation decisions, thereby focusing translation studies on the agent translator. This is relevant to the focus of this study in which I argue that the subjective social identity of the translator is always present in his/her decisions, and this needs to be taken into consideration when analysing any translation product.

It is thus my view that agency needs to be conceptualised as being relational rather than oppositional to structure. Agency is always underpinned by structural factors that construct the agent’s capacity to act, and the structure itself is constructed by the practices of the agents involved. It is for this reason that I draw on Bourdieu (1977:72) to argue that the claims of free will usually associated with the actions of individual agents are therefore exaggerated because any capacity to act is situated within a social context that either facilitates or limits the extent of the said actions. Any free will or power that translation agents may be thought to possess is thus dependent on the social environment which shapes the actions of the agents.

In this regard, a translator’s role in deciding on which text to translate or not may be a question of free will, but this free will would only be effective if the social context of operation is favourable to it. In the same way, the translator may want to exercise his free will in making textual level decisions, but this would ultimately depend on social factors such as the commissioner, the target audience, and even the translator’s economic needs. Marais’s (2014:144) argument that “Western notions of high visibility” should not be the only angle from which to define agency is therefore very valuable because the free will exercised by a translation agent in Asia, for example, may be ineffective in Africa because the social factors underpinning the agent’s actions are different. It is in this light that I look at how Reed’s textual decisions in the translations of *UVB* and *LVNM* were the result of the social factors

involved in the context of the translations, such as the nature of the literary field, the agents involved as well as the translator's habitus.

### **3.4 Agency and the translation of African literature**

This section looks at the relevance of agency to African literature produced in European languages so as to create a theoretical context within which to analyse Reed's translations of Oyono's *UVB* and *LVNM*.

Translation has played a significant role in the development of global literature (Lefevere, 1995). This highlights the role of translators as agents of representation, who introduce foreign literary systems into the different cultures of the world. In this process of literary representation, translators have not just been simple conduits of transfer, rather they have actively been involved in text selection, as well as in adopting strategies that introduce new forms into the literary systems of the target culture (Milton & Bandia, 2009). The dominance of literary translation in the translation theory debate is evidence of the significant role of the agents of the subdiscipline in the development of translation studies. While much of the debate on literary translation has focused on Western literary traditions, recent studies have expanded the frontiers of the discipline to incorporate other literary translations in the discipline (Bandia, 2008; Gentzler, 2008; Kung, 2009). This has contributed in bringing to light different contexts of agency, which have enriched the conceptualisation of translation.

The translation of African literature dates to the periods when oral narratives were represented in the form of pictograms or hieroglyphs (Bandia, 2008:159). Translation in this case was more semiotic than linguistic, since it had to do with transferring meaning from one code of expression to another. Apart from the old writing systems and practices of interlinguistic translation in Africa prior to colonisation, translation can be traced in the activities of the griots, who were multilingual praise singers attached to the courts of African kings (Bandia, 2005). These griots were expert agents who mediated between different communities during peace treaties, trade, or marriage arrangements. Their agency role was thus crucial in that their interventions were instrumental in ending conflicts and forging relationships. While there is no question as to the existence of translation practices in these periods of African history, there is not enough evidence to fully analyse their

implications for translation studies. It may thus be beneficial for translation studies to take up on Santayo's (2006:13) suggestion that an extensive historical study is needed in order to have a comprehensive picture of the discipline.

The written form of African literature began with the arrival of European missionaries to the continent, and the literature at this point was mostly in African languages (Bandia, 2005). This literature has, however, received limited attention in translation studies, which has predominantly focused on the literature produced in European languages by Africans who went through the Western educational system (Marzagora, 2015). African literature in European languages has agency implications by its very nature, given that it is produced within a social environment that shapes its form and function. Wa Thiong'o (1986:4) argues that African literature cannot be understood without the social forces that condition its production. The implication of this is that the different agents involved in literary production are influenced by their social environment, which they aim to also influence through their works. The social context in this regard refers to the political and cultural domination by the colonial West that African writers sought to resist by adopting a style of writing and by addressing the social issues affecting their communities. It is this context of the social influencing literary actions, and *vice versa*, that highlights the agency implication of African literature. The agency involved in the translation of such literature is even more significant with regard to the role of translation in the said literature.

I therefore contend that African literature offers a peculiar context for translation studies because the literary tradition of the continent is different from the Western tradition in terms of its form and function; this difference is required to constitute the basis of analysing the role of the various agents involved in translation activities in this literary system. It is in this regard that the study of the translation of Oyono's *UVB* and *LVNM* offers a relevant context to look at the agents involved in the process and the social factors influencing their actions. In what follows, I present the agency implications that can be drawn from the nature and function of African literature in European languages in order to show the causal link between social factors and agents' actions in the production of this category of literature. This is relevant to the current study because it focuses on how the social context and the actions of the agents involved in the translations of Oyono's *UVB* and *LVNM* are mutually influential.

### 3.4.1 The translational nature of African literature

African literature in European languages offers a peculiar characteristic in that it is written by authors for whom the languages of production are not their native languages (Bandia, 2008). This results in a source text that is different from the homogeneous source text produced by a native speaker of the European language in question.

The major difference in the African literary source text is that the text is greatly influenced by the oral tradition of African communication patterns (Bandia, 2008; Gyasi, 2003). This has led to some scholars claiming that African literature in European languages is a form of translation in which African writers conceive their ideas in their native languages before translating them into the European languages in question (Bandia, 1993; Gyasi, 2003). Bandia (2008) has, however, underscored the risk of confusing the translational process involved in African literature text produced in a European language and the interlingual translation of African literature between European languages. Bandia (2008:166) argues that the intercultural translation approach involved in African literature in European languages is not always a translation *per se*, but a creative aesthetic and linguistic strategy through which the writers seek to reconcile the imperative to write in global languages and the need to preserve their cultural identities. Such an approach has a reparatory function (Bandia, 2008) as the writers seek to reclaim the cultural identities of their communities which have been eroded by colonial domination. The dynamics involved in the translation of such texts are therefore likely to be different from those involved in texts from Western traditions, which are predominantly homogeneous. The problem with this argument is that it seems to neglect the fact that the form of language used in African literary production in European languages may also be the result of the evolution that the foreign language undergoes due to the influence of the local African context, which leads to a transformation in the language.

This then raises the question as to whether the manner in which European languages are used in African literature is different from the way the said languages are spoken in the language communities from which the authors originate. It should be observed that some writers, such as Amadou Kourouma (1987), have themselves asserted the fact that they adopt a translation form of writing in their texts. Others such as Henri Lopez (1982) instead attribute their style to an adoption of the

discursive patterns prevalent in their African communities in which European languages had been domesticated to take a more local flavour. It is thus my argument that while it is obvious that African literature in European languages involves a form of translating African thoughts, the authors have also significantly adopted the discursive patterns of their communities in the way they use European languages. Talking about the way French has been domesticated in Francophone African communities, Bandia (2014:7) has this to say:

The extension of the French language and culture beyond its hexagonal territory meant that the new French geopolitical reality, which could be felt in the four corners of the planet, had to account for the various cultural encounters with other traditions. French began to take on the local colours and flavours of the cultures and traditions encountered in its new and expansive ecology.

The implication here is that the French language used by writers may not necessarily, or totally, be the result of a translational endeavour on the writer's part, but an adoption of the discursive trends in his/her language community. Bandia (2012:42) also argues that the pluri-linguistic nature of African societies results in the European languages, which are the official languages, being heavily influenced by local languages, leading to a heteroglossic version, which is in turn adopted by some writers. This again is an indication that there has been a historical evolution of European languages in Africa, resulting in discursive patterns which blend the languages with the local ones, and the process is continuing. I therefore argue that the description of African literary texts needs to explore instances in which authors deliberately manipulate European languages and cases where discursive trends from African communities have found their way into literary texts. Given the peculiar nature of this literature, it is my contention that the agency implications involved are peculiar to the social context that underpins the African literary system. An analysis of the translation of such texts should therefore focus on the social factors that influence literary productions and the impact that the actions of the agents involved has on the wider environment.

### **3.4.2 Translating African literature in European languages**

This section focuses on studies that have been done on the translation of African literature in European languages and explores the agency implications of these

translation activities and their relevance to Reed's translations of Oyono's *UVB* and *LVNM*.

The agency role of translators and translations, has steadily attracted the attention of research on translation studies in Africa (Bandia, 2009, 2014; Batchelor, 2009; De Kock, 2003; Kruger, 2011; Marais, 2014; Marais & Feinauer, 2017; Mazrui, 2016; Meintjes & Inggs, 2009; Naudé, 2011; Van Coller & Odendaal, 2007; Van Rooyen, 2013; Vosloo, 2007). Most of the studies in this regard have focused on literary translation, with only a small number of scholars focusing their studies on other areas (see for example Marais, 2014; Mazrui, 2016; Naudé, 2011 and Van Rooyen, 2013). A case in point is the recent publication edited by Marais and Feinauer (2017), titled *Translation studies beyond the postcolony*, which sheds light on the social role of translation in Africa, as well as the manner in which the social peculiarities of the continent can shape the conceptualisation of translation.

Regarding African literature in European languages, which is the focus of the current study, most of the translation research (Appiah, 1993/2004; Gyasi, 1998; Osei-Nyame, 2009) has focused on descriptions of the nature of the literature, and prescriptions on how it should be translated, with only a few exceptions (Bandia, 2008; Bush, 2012) looking at the agency of the translators involved in translation activities. The absence of research on the translators' agency in African literature does not mean that there are no agency implications in literary translation on the continent. On the contrary, given the peculiar context of African literature and its peculiar nature, the agency role of translators is likely to be even more significant. It is in this regard that I argue that it would be beneficial for translation studies to explore the different angles of agency that may be involved in the subdiscipline.

One of the rare scholars to have analysed the translation of African literature in European languages from the angle of agency, is Ruth Bush (2012), who argues that the translation of African literature in European languages takes place within a context in which different agents seek to defend their interests. According to her:

The political, aesthetic and commercial stakes of translators and publishers, as well as those of writers, are key to understanding the construction of 'African literature' as a commodity in the global literary marketplace (Bush, 2012:513).

Bush therefore places the translation of African literature within a sociological context in which the translator is not just a neutral transmitter of the source text message, but an interested agent in the translation process. Using the cases of the translations of Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drunkard* (1952) and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), she demonstrates how the leverage that a translator and/or publisher has on the literary field can influence the production of a translation, as well as its reception in the target language.

By comparing the influence of Queneau, the translator, and Gallimard, the publisher, of Tutuola's novel to their counterparts in Achebe's novel, Bush (2012:522) said that "the translator's presence in the text and para-text is dependent on his or her existing symbolic capital together with that of the publisher". Her argument highlights the translator's position within a network of power relations, whose intervention determines the way his/her representation of the source text author is received in the target text community. Another important aspect in Bush's argument is the fact that symbolic capital is a determining factor in the extent to which the translator can assert his/her visibility. These factors are significant to the type of literature in question, given that most of the publishing houses that published the original works and the translations were European institutions. The translations were thus commissioned by these houses, which raises the question as to whether the translators' allegiances rested more with the publishers or the authors, or even themselves, and whether these macro-level social factors are bound to influence the actions of the translator at textual level.

Bandia (2008:161) argues that in translating African literature in European languages, the translator's ability to "grasp and transmit the author's communicative intent" is more important than his or her fluency in the target language. He recommends that such a translation should adopt a three-tier approach in which the translator has to:

journey with the writer through the labyrinth of orature that informs his writing, through the strategies of representation of Otherness, and subsequently part ways with the writer in order to recreate in another colonial language those instances of orality and post coloniality that are fundamental to the European text (Bandia, 2008:174).

The flagship of Bandia's argument is that due to the peculiar nature of African literature in European languages, a source-text oriented approach is more

appropriate to translate it. He therefore echoes Venuti's view of a foreignisation approach as a mechanism of according more visibility to the source text. While Venuti and Bandia both advocate foreignisation, the motivations for their views are different. Venuti perceives foreignisation as a means with which to resist the dominance of the Anglo-American culture, while Bandia sees it a means to reclaim African cultural values which have been eroded by years of cultural imperialism from Europe. Bandia therefore views African literature in European languages as having a reparatory function, which needs to be maintained in the translations of the literary works concerned. This argument goes contrary to the dominant trends in literary translation, which have argued that the target text norms are the determining factors of any literary translation (Hermans, 1999; Lefevere, 1992; Toury, 1995). It thus raises questions of acceptability if the aim of the translation is a faithful representation of the original. How would a translator transpose the cultural world view of the source text into a different language system for a different type of audience? In this regard, Bandia (2008:161) asserts that an African translator, rather than a European one, is better suited for such a translation, given that s/he would be "intimately familiar with the logos of African culture". The problem with this argument is that it seems to suggest that Africa is a homogeneous system with the same cultural patterns and any African can grasp the world view of another. What would make someone from Lesotho to understand the world view of a Senegalese more than the way a European would understand it? How can a hybrid form produced in a different part of Africa be understood in another?

While my focus is not to weigh in on who is better placed to translate a given text, it is my view that Bandia's argument has agency-related implications, given that he raises the issue of the role of the translator's social context in influencing textual level decisions. Given the fact that this genre of literature is a means of resisting cultural domination, the textual level actions of the translator are significant as they have an impact in asserting the cultural identities of the source text authors' communities. In a later publication, Bandia (2012) highlights how the hybrid identity of African literature has evolved into a more plurilingual one, and underscores the implication of this evolution for translation studies. According to him, the heterogeneous nature of contemporary postcolonial literary works in Africa reflects the realities in the societies from which the authors originate:

[C]ontemporary postcolonial fiction captures in writing previously untranscribed speech usually of those marginalized by a neo-colonial elite, as these are works attuned to issues of class, language, and power (Bandia, 2012:430).

In other words, these societies have experienced changes in the type of challenges they face in their daily existence, and literary productions have reflected the changes through the “creation of heterogeneous and plurilingual discourse [that signals] a clear break with the hegemonic language of colonisation or the elite” (Bandia, 2012:422). These heterogeneous formations are different from the hybrid formations of colonial literature that have been discussed earlier (Bandia, 2008; Gyasi, 1998), in the sense that they do not only adapt oral tradition for the foreign language or introduce a few words from local languages into the text, as they involve an admixture of different languages and cultures against a backdrop of social hierarchy (Bandia, 2012:422). Bandia (2012:425) then argues that these texts question Western notions of homogeneous binary texts in translation, and open up new perspectives on translation strategies:

How does one translate a heterogeneous text? Which target language(s) or variet[ies] of language should be chosen? How does one maintain the power balance between these languages or language varieties? ... How should a translating language be constructed to deal with a heterogeneous text? Would such a translating language have the same sociocultural and ideological significance as the language of the source heterogeneous text? Who is the target readership of a heterogeneous text?

The implications here are that revolution and self-representation are the bedrock of heterogeneous language in African literature, and the decisions of a translator of such texts are bound to either be dissociative or associative of the ideologies involved. Furthermore, the issue of target readership is important, given that the language used is peculiar to specific social contexts and a corresponding context may not exist in the target text. Bandia’s argument also implies that African writers are influenced by the realities of their social contexts and this underscores the need for this social context to be considered when translating such texts, as well as when analysing their translations.

Furthermore, the issue of hybrid formations in literary texts, and their ideological underpinnings, are interesting avenues within which to explore the agency role of translation. The translations of such texts need to maintain their composite and

heteroglossic nature by paying attention to the language varieties and the power inequalities they represent (Bandia, 2012:430). What this argument implies is that a translation is the representation of the original, and the translator is required to endeavour to present a true picture of the source text realities. Considering that the translator is a “socialised individual” (Tyulenev, 2014), my argument is that the choices s/he makes in the representation process, especially when texts have ideological undertones, would be influenced by his/her habitus which has been constructed by his/her social environment. The social environment is thus needed to understand the factors that influence the translator’s choices. It is in this regard that this study is about exploring the social factors which influenced decisions made by the agents involved in Reed’s translations of Oyono’s *UVB* and *LVNM*.

Gyasi (1998) has also underscored how important the form of African literature in European languages is to its translation. According to him (1998:10), African writers who write in European languages reproduce the oral poetics of African literature by adapting the European language to the expression of their African identity. He thus considers these writers as creative translators who translate their African thoughts and objects into foreign languages (Gyasi, 1998:10). He then argues that translating such literary texts demands a new approach, in which the translator would have to be able to transpose the linguistic features and cultural realities of the source text into the target language. He asserts that:

What the critical translator of African literature has to keep in mind is that he or she is translating a whole culture into a different language, just as the African writers themselves have done in their writings (Gyasi, 1998:20).

This argument echoes that of Bandia (2008) in highlighting the language formations that constitute African literature in European languages. His prescriptive approach to the translation of such texts also leaves unanswered the question related to whether the translator’s allegiance would not be influenced by his habitus. While this argument seems to be born of the intention to do justice to the source text of African authors, I contend that there are other social factors, and interests, that may undermine the translator’s ability, or will, to be a faithful representer of the source text author.

Appiah (1993/2004), on his part, has argued that in African literature, the language used is inscribed in a specific sociocultural context, and the interpretation of meaning always has to take the sociocultural context into consideration. He further asserts that meaning within the said context can be deciphered from either the literal meaning or the author's intentional meaning, and that in order to fully understand a literary text produced in such a context, the reader needs to have a full grasp of the language of the said text so as to be able to identify the full meaning of the words, phrases and sentences of the text (Appiah, 1993:422). Appiah's claim of the centrality of meaning in African literature is important, especially when dealing with the text type on which this study is focused, which deviates from the homogeneous texts that have informed Western notions of translation. To translate such texts, Appiah (1993:427) recommends a 'thick translation' approach that would ensure that the full meaning of the source text is carried over to the target text. He explains that such an approach involves the full understanding of the source text, and the use of paratextual features such as annotations and glosses (Appiah, 1993:427). The significance of this argument is that it highlights the fact that the translator's visibility, through interventionist annotations, can contribute in framing the meaning of a text. This is similar to the arguments of agency scholars such as, Baker (2006) and Hermans (2007), who have underscored translators' use of framing to actively participate in translation projects.

The problem with Appiah's argument is that it is situated within the framework of translation for language teaching, and the use of paratextual features may be cumbersome to the target text reader outside a classroom context. Furthermore, he does not seem to consider the fact that the use of annotations actually provides the translator the power to determine which message gets to the target reader, and this may be different from the intended message of the source text author. It is thus my argument that the position of the author vis-à-vis the source text world is a factor that may determine the way s/he represents the author's world view in the target text.

Claramonte (2014:243) has focused on the role of African literature in European languages in combatting social ills by contending that African literature does not only tell a story but serves as the voice of the downtrodden who have been marginalised by those in power. African literature is therefore underpinned by ideological undertones which shape its production, as well as its translation. Focusing on the

concept of heteroglossia in African literature in European languages, she argues that the authors' subversive use of the European languages is a deliberate attempt to recapture their identities in the face of cultural and linguistic domination from the coloniser. To her, these writers perceive the issue of language as a political one, and the Western imposition of a monolingual system as an attempt to erode their very existence (Claramonte, 2014:250). They thus seek to resist this domination by using the European languages in a way that reaffirms their cultural identities and resists colonial domination.

Claramonte (2014:258) argues that translation in this case is a process of cultural representation in which translators are "agents who speak to the other, on behalf of the other", but which may become an act of collusion in which decisions are made in line with the interest of the dominating power. Claramonte's argument is important in that it throws light on the political implications of African literature, and the difficulty for translators of such text not to be biased in their representation of the source text realities. She also raises the issue of the effect of the translator's identity on the choices made, by asserting that the representation of the source text would be faithful or biased depending on the disposition of the translator involved (Claramonte, 2014:258).

I attest that her views are significant in that they underscore the power relations prevalent in the social context of literary production in Africa, and the impact this is bound to have on the actions of the agents involved in production. The agency of the agents in this context is determined by the social factors in place. Her work also highlights the agency role of translators who play a social role in speaking out in the interest of the masses. Her argument on the role of the translator's identity in decision-making is also symmetrical to Bourdieu's concept of habitus which is shaped by the agent's social environment and influence his/her perceptions and actions. This is relevant to this study in that it is my argument that the decisions made during the process of translation are influenced by the habitus of the translator involved.

The translation of African literature in European languages therefore offers an interesting context within which to conceptualise agency in Bourdieusian terms. This is because the field of its production brings together institutional and individual agents with competing interests and these factors affect the actions that are taken by

the authors, publishers, translators, and other agents that are involved in the production process. Furthermore, there are agency-related implications in the role that translators in Africa play in shaping the political, cultural, and economic environment of the different communities. African literature has a social commitment role and its translators are thus agents who are contributing in asserting the values of African communities and improving their economic and political situations. Bourdieu's theory therefore offers an appropriate framework within which to understand how the agents of African literature are constructed by the social factors of the literary field, and how this field is constructed by the actions of the agents. It is in this regard that this study looks at the social factors that underpin the actions of the agents involved in the translation of *UVB* and *LVNM*, and the impact of the said actions on the translation product.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter has been to critically examine how the notion of agency has been applied to translation studies, with special emphasis on the translation of African literature in European languages. The chapter started with a conceptualisation of 'agency' as a theoretical framework in translation studies, followed by an analysis of how the concept has been applied in the discipline. It ended with the implications of agency to African literature, in order to show the relevance of adopting it as a framework for this study. This enables me in the next chapter to examine how agency played out in the context within which Reed's translations of Oyono's novels were produced.

## THE CONTEXT OF PRODUCING *UNE VIE DE BOY* AND *LE VIEUX NÈGRE ET LA MÉDAILLE* IN ENGLISH

### 4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I argued for the agency theory in the analysis of Reed's translations of Oyono's novels. I demonstrated that there is a dialectic relationship between agency and its social context, because agents construct, and are constructed, by the social context within which they operate. This chapter offers an analysis of the context of the production of Reed's translation of *UVB* and *LVNM* from a Bourdieusian perspective. It therefore looks at the field in which the translations were produced, the agents involved, the social causality of the agents' actions, and the effects of the said actions. The chapter begins by explaining the methodology I adopted for the study, followed by an analysis of the data pertaining to the field of literary production, and the mutually influential relationship between the field and the actions of the agents involved in the translations.

### 4.2 Research methodology

This section explains the research approach and processes that were used in the study. It therefore outlines the purpose of the study, the research design and the processes of data collection and analysis.

This study adopted a sociological conceptual framework, which provides for the study of social phenomena by looking at the relationship between the agents involved in the social phenomena and their social context. In this regard, the study focuses on the relationship between the social context and the agents involved in the English translations of *UVB* and *LVNM*, and the impact of that relationship on the actions of the agents involved. As a result, the methodological approach that I adopted was context-based in nature, given that I had to look at the social context of the translation activity and its influence on the actions of agents at the macro-level and textual level of the translation process. It is worth mentioning that the debate on the most appropriate model of translation research has been a central theme of the discipline in recent years, with scholars advancing different approaches that focus on different aspects of translation. In this regard, Pym (1998) has focused on a historical

approach to the study of translation phenomena; William and Chesterman (2002) have mapped the field of translation research as constituting of the processes, contexts, products and agents involved in translation activities; Saldanha and O'Brien (2013) have argued for a comprehensive approach that looks at the product, the process, and the context of translation phenomena; Angelelli and Baer (2016) have argued for a poststructuralist approach to conducting research in translation and interpreting; and Mellinger and Hanson (2017) have focused on quantitative methods in the study of translation and interpreting.

Most studies in translation activities tend to focus on one of the three main areas that have emerged: the product, the process, and the context (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2013). Product-based approaches focus on the translated texts, either in comparison with the source texts or in relation to their impact in the target culture; the process-based approach looks at the cognitive processes that take place during the transfer process, while the context-based approach focuses on the macro-level factors that influence decision-making involved in the translation activity.

It is my argument that none of the focus areas of study identified can fully be studied without reference to the other. In other words, an analysis of the product would inevitably involve an understanding of decision-making and contextual factors that led to the product having a particular nature; in the same way, the process cannot be studied without referring to the contextual factors influencing the decisions, as well as the outcome of those decisions in the form of the product. Furthermore, any observation of the translation context would refer to the impact of the said context on the process and also the product. It is for this reason that I have adopted what I have named an 'integrated context-based model', which has enabled me to analyse the translator's agency by situating it within a field that integrates the context, the process, the agents, and the products in a mutually influential network.

This is in line with Bourdieu's social theory which underpins this study and which provides for the study of social phenomena by looking at the dialectic relationship between agents' actions and their social contexts. I thus adopted this approach because it is in my view the appropriate lens that enables me to study how the agents involved in the translations of *UVB* and *LVNM* constructed and were constructed by their social context. It is this model that enabled me to design the

relevant methods for the collection and analysis of data on the study of Reed's translations of *UVB* and *LVNM*.

#### **4.2.1 Research design**

This study is qualitative in nature and the purpose is both exploratory and explanatory. According to Creswell (2014:4), qualitative research studies the human experience from general, as well as individual perspectives, and provides a framework within which to capture human behaviour within particular contexts. In this regard, this research sets out to study the actions of the agents involved in the translations of Oyono's *UVB* and *LVNM* into English. A research purpose enables the researcher to select the appropriate conceptual and methodological tools for the study (Creswell, 2014). I therefore adopted an exploratory and explanatory approach for this research because I intended to investigate the social context within which *UVB* and *LVNM* were translated, the causal factors that influenced the actions of the agents involved, and the social effects of the actions taken during the translation process. According to Blaikie (2010:70), an exploratory research seeks to investigate the nature of a phenomenon and provide a better understanding of it. It is relevant in cases where little information has been uncovered about what is being studied. This explains why explanatory research was adopted in the study, because there is no evidence of any study on agency in John Reed's translations of Ferdinand Oyono's works.

I therefore sought to investigate new information on the concept of agency with regard to the translations of *UVB* and *LVNM* into English. I also adopted an explanatory research approach because I sought to analyse the relationship between the various factors that influenced the nature and impact of agency in Reed's translations. An explanatory approach enables the researcher to outline the causal relation between the different aspects of a study (Blaikie, 2010:71). I thus sought to explain the factors that influenced the role of John Reed as an agent in his translations of *UVB* and *LVNM*.

The study adopted a case study method in which the data that was collected and analysed, focusing on particular translations by a particular translator. Robert Yin (2009:18) defines a case study method as:

an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

This implies that a case study is a method that enables a researcher to study anything from an individual, an institution, a product, or a process (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2013). According to Susam-Sarajeva (2009:40), this research method has been applied extensively in translation studies to study translation-related activities, products, or individuals in real-life situations, which can only be analysed or understood within their specific contexts.

This research therefore focuses on the mutually influential relationship between the actions of the agents involved in the English translations of *UVB* and *LVNM* and their social context. The advantage of using a case study method is that the method is intensive, flexible, and contextual (Susam-Sarajeva, 2009:39). This implies that because the study focuses on a single unit, it offers more in-depth analysis, thereby giving the researcher more insights into the case under study. The flexibility of the method also enables the researcher to use data from different sources in analysing the phenomenon. The choice of the English translations of *UVB* and *LVNM* as a case study is because in the context of translation of African literature between European languages, which foregrounds this study, John Reed was one of the first translators and remains one of the most successful to have worked in this literary category (Currey, 2008).

Using Reed's works as a case study was intended to understand what social factors influenced his actions, as well as the social effects of his translations, to provide useful insights into the concept of agency in translation studies in general and, particularly, the translation of African literature. Although the case study method has been criticised as its results cannot be generalised, the findings of a case study can offer lenses through which to better understand other contexts (Susam-Sarajeva, 2009:53). In this regard, while the results of the study of the English translations of *UVB* and *LVNM* may not be generalised to other contexts, they provide information that can offer an understanding of different translation cases which take place in similar contexts. They also provide useful information on the understanding of the roles of translation agents in translation phenomena.

#### **4.2.2 Data collection instruments**

The data for this research is made up of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources have to do with information from the translator and publisher of the texts under study, as well as the corpus from the source and target texts. The secondary sources are made up of documentary information on the context of producing the translations.

The information from the translator and the publisher was collected through internet-mediated interviews. Interviews are a straightforward data collection tool in which the researcher extracts information from the participant(s) through a question–answer process (Saldanha & O’Brien, 2013). The main advantage of the interview method in data collection is that it provides the researcher with privileged access to the participant(s) thoughts and perspectives regarding a subject, which may not always be accessed through other methods of study (Saldanha & O’Brien 2013:169).

When it comes to internet-mediated interviews, the questions–responses process takes place over the internet, with there being no direct physical contact between the researcher and the participant. According to Saldanha and O’Brien (2013:187), internet-mediated interviews can either be done through asynchronous or synchronous communication. Asynchronous communication consists of email-mediated communication, while synchronous communication is done using voice-over internet protocols. For this study, I used the asynchronous method in which I sent unstructured questions to the translator and the publisher via email, and they returned their responses through the same means.

The advantage of using this method is that it enabled the participants to answer in their own time, which made it more convenient for me to extract more detailed and thoughtful responses. I therefore sent them the questions without putting pressure on them, and they responded a few days later. This allowed them the necessary time to consult their records and collaborators, aiding them in responding in the most detailed and informed manner possible. The use of unstructured questions also meant that the participants could provide as much information as possible on the subject under discussion (Saldanha & O’Brien, 2013). It also meant that room was provided for follow-up questions to be asked, based on the information provided by the participants. In this regard, a second set of questions were sent to the translator

after he responded to the initial questions; the aim was to get further information on the issues that were being studied.

The corpus data was collected manually. In this regard, culture-bound terms from the source texts were collected with their translations in the target texts, with the aim of understanding the transfer processes of the translator at the micro-textual levels of the translations. The terms collected from the two novels were grouped together, given that the two novels were published in the same year, and the translations were done by the same person at around the same time and were also published in the same year. The terms were thus presented together, specifying the texts from which they were taken.

Secondary sources were also used in this study and were collected through a documentary method. These secondary sources dealt mainly with the social and cultural context within which the translations under study were produced. As such, historical documentation, critical works pertaining to the source texts contexts, and the target texts contexts were processed for information that could throw light on the author, the social environment, and the publication and reception of the source texts, as well as the target texts environments. This documentation was mostly in the form of books and internet-generated articles.

#### **4.2.3 Data analysis**

The data collected was presented using Bourdieu's field approach, which in my view offers an integrated context-based perspective on the study of translation phenomena by looking at the actions of agents in relation to their social context. In this regard, the data collected was analysed in twofold, with the first part of the analysis focusing on the field of production, while the second part involved the product or corpus data.

Bourdieu's concept of field asserts that the field is structured into positions occupied by different agents whose actions are constrained by their habitus, the capital they possess and the way they relate to the other agents (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). It is in line with this that the data on the field was analysed pertaining to the field of African literature within which the translations of *UVB* and *LVNM* were produced, the positions that made up the field, the agents that occupied

those positions, and the habitus and capital that influenced the actions of the agents involved.

This was partitioned into two sections in which the structure of the field was analysed, followed by an analysis of the findings from the interviews with the translator and publisher, who were the main agents involved in the translations under study. The corpus data was analysed through a comparison of the source texts to the target texts, in which textual level transfer processes were analysed against the backdrop of social factors that might have influenced decision-making. This part of the analysis is explained in Chapter 5.

#### **4.2.4 Limitations**

This study is a case study that focuses only on the English translations of *UVB (HB)* and *LVNM (TOMM)*. The findings of the study may therefore not be applied to other contexts. A study of other translation projects in which Reed was involved may reveal additional information pertaining to his agency. In the same way, a study of other translators in different contexts may reveal information that may challenge the argument of this study. Furthermore, the findings are limited to the period during which Reed did the translations, and a similar study in a different historical period may provide different information on the translator's agency.

The methodological framework that I adopted thus enabled me to design an appropriate method of data collection and analysis that was effective in accessing and processing relevant information on agency in the translations of *UVB* and *LVNM*. The analysis of the data collected is discussed in the next section as well as the following chapter.

#### **4.3 The context of translating *Une Vie de Boy* and *Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille***

This section presents an analysis of the structure of the field in which the translations of Oyono's novels took place, and the influence it had on the actions of agents involved in the translations. It begins with a presentation of the field of African literature in the 1950s and 1960s, because this is the period in which the novels and their translations were produced. It then looks at the various agents of the field and the positions they occupied, with the aim of finding out how the structure of the field

constrained the actions of the agents at both macro-level and textual level of the translation process.

With regard to the literary field, the data analysed is secondary data that was collected through documentary sources, and which focused primarily on the social context of the production of the translations of *UVB* and *LVNM*. I therefore carried out an analysis of the historical setting of the source text, as well as that of the target text, in which I looked at the sociocultural and political context of the African literary tradition in the late colonial and early independent periods. Concerning the actions of the agents involved in the translations, which will be discussed in the second part of this section (4.3.2), the data analysed came from the interviews with John Reed and James Currey, who was heading the Heinemann's *AWS* that commissioned the translations of the two novels. This enabled me to understand the factors that influenced the macro-level decisions taken by the publisher and the translator, and the impact this had on the translator's actions at the textual level of the translation project.

#### **4.3.1 The African literary field in the 1950s and 1960s**

This section analyses the African literary field in the 1950s and 1960s as it is the period in which *UVB* and *LVNM* were published. It also marks the time when African literature was just beginning to make its mark on the international stage (Ogundipe, 2015:77). Bourdieu (1991) asserts that a literary field is one of cultural production, which is structured by the objective positions occupied by the different agents of the field.

It is in this regard that I analysed the historical, sociocultural and political context of the African literary field in the late colonial and early independent periods as a means to identify the positions structuring the field and the agents occupying those positions. I argue that the positions that shaped the literary field during the period under study were original works, publishing houses, translated works, and target readership. The agents who occupied these positions were authors, publishers, translators, and readers. These are the factors I considered in analysing the translations of *UVB* and *LVNM*, and the aim was to find out how these factors influenced the actions of the agents involved in the translations, as well as the impact of these actions on the literary field.

#### 4.3.1.1 Original works of African literature in European languages

This section looks at the position in the literary field occupied by original works of African authors writing in European languages. The aim is to explore the relationship between the content and context of source texts and the decisions of agents situated at the publishing and translation levels of the literary field. This is because I contend that the content, form, and reception of a literary work are key factors that influence the decision of a publisher or translator to have a text translated for a foreign audience. Translation decision can therefore not be fully understood without considering source-text factors which have an influence on those decisions.

The term 'African literature' used here has been subject to academic debate, as it seems to suggest the homogeneity of literary productions from the various part of the continent (Ogundipe, 2015). Adeoti (2015) has, however, argued that African literature in European languages is born of the historical, sociocultural, and political realities that are common to African communities. This implies that, due to a shared history of colonisation, the early stages of modern African literature were characterised by productions that presented similarities in form and content, which made it logical to perceive the literature under the same category. It is within this context that I have used the term 'African literature' in the present study. The literary publications of this period have been classified under the ambit of postcolonial literature (Bandia, 2008; Batchelor, 2009; Gyasi, 2006), with the term referring to literary productions whose major themes have to do with the cultural and political resistance to colonialism, as well as resistance to the misery brought upon the masses by the new authorities of the independent era.

My intention is not to dwell on post-colonialist perspectives, but to situate the production of Oyono's novels within a broader context of literary production at a particular moment in history. Oyono's *UVB* and *LVNM* shared common features with other writings by authors from the different language societies of colonised Africa, in that they primarily focused on the discontent of the colonised Africans regarding the policies and practices of the colonial authorities. According to Bandia (2014:9):

What makes the experience of postcolonial francophone literature somewhat exceptional is the fact that it is conceived as a discourse of resistance, of empowerment and representation of the multiple voices that had been silenced or

marginalized for far too long by colonialist or imperialist practices and through hegemonic encroachment.

Although Bandia's assertion refers to Francophone Africa, the situation was similar to that of the non-Francophone colonies of Africa. A good demonstration of this is that Oyono's *LVNM* has been compared to Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) in terms of the ways in which the authors present different protagonists who react differently to the colonial authorities (Mumba, 2007). In Achebe's novel, the protagonist resists the white man's encroachment to the end, while in *LVNM* the protagonist allows himself to be fooled for a long time before realising the ills of the system.

Resistance and contestation were thus dominant themes of African literary productions in the 1950s, which was the period in which Oyono's two novels were published. Literature thus became a tool for resisting this domination and reasserting the cultural and political expression of Africans that had been suppressed by years of colonial subjugation (Bandia, 2008). In other words, authors from countries under the domination of different European powers used different experiences to propagate this theme of resistance. What this implies is that the production of African literary works in European languages was influenced by ideological factors and it is my contention that these factors had an influence on the decisions that were made by translators and publishers to translate some of the works or not.

Culture was another important feature of African literature in European languages. Colonialism had led to the denigration of African culture, which was perceived as primitive and backward in the face of Western culture, and early African writers sought to correct the negative impression by valorising African ways of life in their works (Bandia, 2008). As such, the beliefs, traditions, and customs of African people are show-cased with the implicit intention of demonstrating that they are in no way inferior to European culture and are even considered superior in some cases. When the catechist in Mongo Beti's *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba* (1956) renounces polygamy in church but marries two other wives in secret, the author is ridiculing Western values in the face of African culture. When Meka in Oyono's *LVNM* secretly visits Mami Titi for the native gin which has been decreed 'unholy' by the church, Oyono is upholding African ways of life as opposed to the imposed Western Christian teachings. In the same vein, Chinua Achebe celebrates African culture in the face of the marauding Western ways of life through his portrayal of the social cohesion,

beliefs systems, rituals, and customs of the Igbo community in *Things Fall Apart* (1958).

It is thus my argument that the cultural content of African literature is not a neutral portrayal of the lifestyle of African communities, but rather an instrument with which postcolonial authors sought to resist the dominance of imposed Western cultures on the African way of life. Research on African literature has shown that the need for cultural exchange was an important factor in influencing the decisions to publish the translation of works from one European language to another (Batchelor, 2009; Milton & Bandia, 2009). This implies that source-texts factors have an influence on the decisions made regarding the translation of literary works.

Another important feature of African literature in the 1950s and 1960s was the peculiarity of its language style. Research has underscored the centrality of language in the production of African writings in European languages (Bandia, 2008; Batchelor, 2009; Bush, 2012; Gyasi, 2003). In this regard, Batchelor (2009) has argued that African writers use language as a tool of resistance and identity formation. In the same vein, Bandia (2008) contends that the linguistic aesthetics of African literature is the result of the encounter between the European languages and the authors' traditional oral inspiration. This highlights the fact that the colonial experience of imposing European languages on Africans led to African writers opting to write in the colonial languages but adapting these languages to effectively portray their cultural world views. This gave the literature an identity that made it different from other texts produced in the European languages because the cultural realities of the authors resulted in their texts having a hybrid form. Writers resorted to the oral traditions of Africa to produce texts that valorised the oral culture of communication in African societies. As such, their works portray an abundant use of proverbs, fables, puns, metaphors, and other rhetorical devices (Bandia, 2008:29). I contend that while this adaptation of the European languages in African literature was a form of resistance to the colonial experience on the part of the authors who sought to reject the imposition of Western media of communication on their societies, it was also a reflection of the domestication of colonial languages that prevailed in the way African communities used these languages in real-life situations. The language of African literature therefore has ideological implications; it is therefore my argument that this aesthetic factor has an influence on the decision of a publisher to commission a

translation, the strategies used by the translator, and the manner of reception of the translated work.

#### **4.3.1.2 African literature and the publishing sector**

This section looks at the role of publishing houses in the selection, translation, and production of translated works of African authors writing in European languages. The aim is to explore the influence that the publisher of the English translations of *UVB* and *LVNM* had on translation action at both the macro-level and textual level.

The publishing sector was an important factor in influencing the actions that were taken in producing the English translations of *UVB* and *LVNM*. Research has underscored the crucial role that publishing houses play in the production of translated works, by making decisions that constrain the actions of the agents involved in cultural productions (Heilbron, 2008; Milton & Bandia, 2009; Sapiro, 2008; Serry, 2002; Venuti, 2013). In this regard, Milton and Bandia (2009) have argued that publishing houses are agents who use translation to shape the literary taste of target readers.

Using the case of Heinemann's *AWS*, Milton and Bandia (2009:4) contend that their selection of texts for translation was motivated by their desire to give more visibility to African literature. Venuti (2013) has also argued that while publishers usually base their decisions on the taste of their target market, they can also influence the taste of the market by exposing chosen translations to readers. In the same vein, Heilbron (2008) contends that publishing houses are important agents of the promotion and reception of translated works in a target system. Based on the study of Dutch works in the French book market, Heilbron reveals the role economic, ideological, and political factors play in the selection of foreign works for translation and publication. Also, Serry (2002) has shown how the selection of works for translation by the French publisher, Le Seuil, was influenced by the state of the literary field in which the publisher was seeking to develop an image. In order to compete with more prominent publishing houses, Le Seuil resorted to publishing foreign works to improve on its image in the publishing sector. Translation was thus used to gain symbolic capital, which transformed into economic capital in the long run as the publishing house's reputation grew and it started attracting more renowned original authors. On her part, Sapiro (2008:154) has argued that publishers play a

crucial role in the circulation of translated works. She contends that while economic gains remain the main driving force behind the actions of publishing houses, new publishers tend to use translated works as an innovative way to gain recognition and compete with more established publishers.

The publishing industry is thus an influential centre of power in the production of translated literary works. Regarding the context of *UVB* and *LVNM*, the publishing experiences were not very different in the Francophone world of the source texts and the Anglophone system of the target texts. For Francophone African writers in the 1950s, it was difficult for their works to be accepted for publication by the publishing houses in France because the works were considered inferior in nature in terms of content and language (Bandia, 2014). This led to some educated elite from the French colonies, who were based in France, to set up small publishing institutions to provide an outlet to the works of writers from the colonies.

The most prominent of these publishing houses was *Présence Africaine*, founded in 1949 by the Senegalese Alioune Diop (Frioux-Salgas, 2009). The aim of this publishing house was to offer a platform for the expression of the political and cultural views of people from the colonies whose voices had been suppressed by colonial domination and censorship (Frioux-Salgas, 2009:5).

Mainstream publishers in France also began to publish the works of some writers from the colonies but would market them on different shelves as minority literature (Bandia, 2014). It was within this context that *UVB* and *LVNM* were published by *Julliard* in 1956. In the Anglophone system of colonial Africa, works written by Africans were also marginalised in Europe. Publishing houses did not think that European readers could be interested in the works of African authors and that African readers could only be interested in educational books (Currey, 2008:2). There was thus little room for creative works from Africa.

This situation changed with African countries gaining independence, as there was now an appetite on the continent for literary works produced by Africans. It was within this context that the *AWS* was set up in 1962 to publish the English works of African writers (Currey, 2008:1). This publishing house was to become the main vehicle of African literature in English, as it published originals and translations of the works of African writers from different parts of the continent. It was in line with its

African agenda that this publisher commissioned and published the English translations of *UVB* and *LVNM* in 1956 (Currey, 2008:60).

#### **4.3.1.3 African literature in translation**

This section looks at the place of translated works in African literature. The aim is to situate the position of translation in the African literary field and its impact on this field.

Translation is situated at the intersection of different literary systems (Pym, 2009). This implies that translation is the bridge that connects the target text system to that of the source text. Translation is therefore the means through which the source text gains access to the target text system and the target text readers get introduced to the source text. It is in this regard that Bourdieu (2002) contends that translation is the instrument that facilitates the circulation of literary works from one culture to another. This indicates that translation is an important factor of the international literary field, as it occupies a position that involves agents whose actions influence other factors of the field.

The agents of translation are not limited to translators, but also involve publishers, editors, and advisors, who each play a role at different stages of the translation process. The publisher selects the text and the translator to translate it, as well as how to publish the translation; the editors assess the quality of the translation on behalf of the publisher and recommend possible amendments, while the advisors recommend works that are worthy of translation for a particular audience. These agents do not work in exclusive positions, as some of them may belong to different positions in the field, thereby playing more than one role in the translation process. It is thus possible to find cases in which the translator is also an advisor and the advisor is also the editor, thereby highlighting the interconnectedness of translation with other disciplines and the impact that it can play in influencing translation action. This is the situation that applies to the translation of African literature in the period covered by this study, as most of the works were translated by people who also worked as literary critics, editors, advisors, and educators (Currey, 2008). This implies that the influence of such double agents went beyond the textual level, as they could advise on the selection of texts and shape the mind-set of the readership through their functions as critics and educators. It is in this regard that I argue in line

with Wolf (2007b) that translation action constructs and is constructed by the social contexts of the agents involved.

With regard to the translation of *UVB* and *LVNM*, Reed was not only a translator, but also a literary critic, a language and literature educator, as well as an advisor to the *AWS*. It would thus be of interest to explore the impact of his multifunctional identity in the translation process.

In this section, I have outlined the structure of the literary field in which the translations of *UVB* and *LVNM* were produced. I have argued that the positions that made up the field were the source texts system, the publishing sector, the target text system, and the translation sector. I have also argued that these factors were bound by a mutually influential relationship in the sense that the nature of the source texts and the expectations of the target readership constrained the decision of the publisher to select a text for translation and how to publish the translation. The textual level actions of the translator and the labelling actions of the publisher both influence the reception of the translations, while the decisions of the publisher influence the actions of the translator.

#### **4.3.1.4 Reception and the translation of African literature**

This section discusses the reception of the translations of African literary works. The aim is to explore the role of the target audience in influencing the selection and translation of literary works.

In his article on the international circulation of cultural goods, Bourdieu (2002) asserts that translated texts do not travel with their contexts and recipients of such texts reinterpret the texts based on the norms of the target system. This explores how the reception of an original text cannot be expected to be the same as that of the translation, because the factors conditioning literary reception in the target system are different from those of the source text system. In this regard, readers appreciate a translated work against the norms of their own literary culture, because translation decontextualises a text from its uniquely constitutive factors such as language, cultural values, and literary conventions (Venuti, 2013:161). This implies that the successful reception of a source text, or the absence thereof, does not automatically translate into an equivalent success in the reception of the target text since the experience of the reader of a translation is radically different from that of a source

text. The agents of translation therefore need to consider the issue of reception during the translation process.

It is in this regard that I contend that the reception of a translation is an important factor that influences the actions of translation agents. I therefore perceive reception as a position in the literary field, which is occupied by agents such as editors, reviewers, academics, and common readers of literary works. Reception, or readership, of translated literature is influential in the translation process in the sense that it constrains the actions of the publisher in the selection of texts to be translated, the translator to translate them, and the manner through which to present them to the readership. Reception also influences the actions of the translator in that the target audience constrains the strategies used by the translator. The agents who make up the readership of translated works are themselves constructed by their social environment in the sense that their literary tastes are shaped by the literary traditions to which they have been exposed (Bourdieu, 1984). This underscores the dialectic relationship between the different positions and agents of the literary field in the sense that, while the target audience reception shapes the actions of translation agents in the literary field, the literary preferences of the said target audience are themselves constructed by the realities of the field. It is against this backdrop that I look at the readership of the literary field in which Reed translated the works of Oyono.

The target readership of the *AWS*, which commissioned the translations of *UVB* and *LVNM*, was made up for the book markets of the British colonies in Africa, as well as for the international literary markets (Currey, 2008:3). In Africa, their target was the educational sector, as well as those who read for leisure. In this regard, the publisher wanted to discard the view which was held by the British publishing industry of the time, that books in Africa were only for education and not for Africans to enjoy and enhance their understanding of the various ways of life of other Africans (Currey, 2008:2). Unlike their Francophone counterparts, whose primary purpose was to convince their colonial masters of the cultural values of Africans, African authors writing in English were more interested in producing works for the African readership (Bandia, 2014:7). *UVB* and *LVNM* were thus translated for an audience that was not identical to that of the original audience. The literary preference of this readership was closely related to their social context, characterised by the

nationalistic discourse that sought to resist Western political and cultural domination, while upholding the political and cultural values of Africa. Readers were thus interested in literary works that reflected these nationalistic themes (Batchelor, 2009). The literary publications of the *AWS* were therefore assured of a favourable reception because the readers could easily identify with the works which were reflections of their social realities. It is my contention that this assurance of a positive reception was influential in the commissioning of the English translations of *UVB* and *LVNM*, and it underscores the influence of the target audience in constraining the actions of the publisher and the translator in the process of producing translations of literary works.

It could therefore be argued that the positions that structured the African literary field of the 1950s and 1960s were original works, publishing houses, translated works, and target readership, of which the main agents were the authors, publishers, translators, and readers. With regard to translated works, which is the focus of this study, the main agents involved were the publishers who selected the works and the translators who translated them. It is in this regard that I chose to interview the publisher and translator of the translations of *UVB* and *LVNM*.

#### **4.3.2 Agents of the translations of *UVB* and *LVNM***

This section focuses on the analysis of the interviews that I conducted with James Currey and Keith Sambrook of the *AWS* (see Appendix A), who commissioned and published the translations of *UVB* and *LVNM*, and with John Reed who translated the works (see Appendix B). The aim was to understand the reasons behind their actions, and to relate them to the factors of the field within which they were working.

##### **4.3.2.1 The publisher-agent of *UVB* and *LVNM* in English**

This section focuses on the analysis of the results of my interview with James Currey of the *AWS*, who published the English translations of *UVB* and *LVNM*.

My interview with the publisher, James Currey, was aimed at discovering the social factors that constrained the actions of the *AWS* in selecting, commissioning, and producing the translations, which are the subject of this study. This is because I consider the publisher-commissioner of literary translation as an important agent in the translation process; it is him/her who decides on what is selected for translation,

who translates it, and decides how it is published (Bourdieu, 2002). I was particularly interested in the publishing agenda of the AWS, the initiation of the translation project, the choice of the translator, the translation process, and the target audience response. My interaction was with Currey, to whom I sent the questions by email, who in his response indicated that he had answered the questions with the help of Keith Sambrook, who had handled the contractual aspects of the project with the translator (see Appendix A). He also referred me to his autobiography on his work with the AWS for the first five questions of the interview as well as any other related information pertaining to the activities of the publishing house. Consequently, the book – discussed below – became another source of data which I used in the study.

Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) contends that the actions of agents are always aimed at interests that they have in the field. I thus sought to find out the interest that was driving the actions of the AWS in the literary field and how this was influential in the decision to commission the translations of *UVB* and *LVNM*. The first question I therefore asked Currey was about the publishing agenda of the AWS. For an answer to this question, Currey referred me to his book, *Africa Writes Back: The African Writers Series and the Launch of African Literature* (2008). The book reveals that when Heinemann Educational Books chose Africa as one of its major markets, it set out to publish works written by Africans that could replace European books in the educational sector of African communities. This ambition was initially championed by Keith Sambrook and Chinua Achebe:

They wanted students in African schools and universities to be able to read imaginative work by Africans; and they were determined to introduce African writers to an international literary audience (Currey, 2008:xv).

The passion to give African writers a voice and exposure to the international readership was shared by Currey, who joined the publishing house with the special assignment to run the AWS (Currey, 2008:5). What is important here is the fact that institutional agenda is usually shaped by the individual perspectives of those who work for the institution. When a publishing house sets a mission for itself, it relies on the individuals working therein to ensure that the mission is correctly carried out (Bourdieu, 2002). This show that the extent to which the agenda of a publishing house is pursued, depends on the extent to which those working for it adhere to the mission of the publisher. Given that every agent in the field possesses capital and

habitus that influence their actions, it is my contention that the agents working for the publishing house may preserve or modify its agenda if their interests are aligned with those of the publishing house. It is in this regard that it could be argued that while *Heinemann* was more interested in European books, the coincidental recruitment of Sambrook and Currey, who both shared a common passion for African literature, contributed in introducing and sustaining an African agenda within the publishing house.

This agenda led to a variety of African literary works being published and exposed to an international audience. The agenda also contributed substantially to the growth of literary translation on the continent. These factors collectively led to the commissioning of *UVB* and *LVNM* as English translations for publication through the *AWS*. It shall be seen in the section on the interview with Reed that he had a personal interest in African literature, which came about as result of his work in the discipline for 17 years. I would argue that through the course of his work in Africa, Reed had acquired a habitus that predisposed him to have an interest in the promotion of African literature. I therefore contend that the shared interest of Sambrook, Currey, and Reed was influential in the actions that led to the translation of the two novels. This underscores the extent to which the actions of agents involved in translation activities are influenced by other agents in the field, and in my view Reed's interactions would not have yielded the same results if he was dealing with a publisher or commissioner who had a different view regarding the content and style of his translations.

Another question for which I was referred to Currey's book for answers, had to do with the reason behind his personal interest in African literature. The aim of the question was to find out how his background might have contributed in shaping the habitus that made him, a non-African, to be passionate about African literature. The book revealed that Currey's family was connected to the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa:

His family connections made him curious about the realities of the regime in South Africa. His poet father and writer mother were both born in South Africa. A forebear, who went to Natal in 1849, started a newspaper and wrote cantankerous articles in the *Natal Witness* about the colonial government's treatment of the Zulus (Currey, 2008: xvii).

Currey himself worked in Cape Town for *The New African* during the period of the Sharpeville Massacre and the Rivonia Trials. This brought him into contact with writers of resistance to apartheid, leading him to also become involved in the anti-apartheid struggle through publishing (Currey, 2008: xvii). It could therefore be said that his background had endowed him with a habitus that made him to be ideologically opposed to the marginalisation of indigenous Africans. This further instilled in him the willingness to contribute to a more just world by giving a voice to the voiceless, hence the desire to give African writers a medium through which to tell their own stories.

Bourdieu (1977) asserts that the habitus of an agent is acquired from the formative years in the family setting through the educational system and other social experiences. It could be argued that Currey's habitus had been nurtured by the historical experiences of his family and his professional background, which shaped his perspective on colonial injustices and the resistance they engendered. This habitus could have contributed in creating a harmonious relational network with the other agents of the translation project, who were his colleague, Keith Sambrook, and the translator, John Reed, since they all shared a common interest regarding African literature. This harmonious relationship thus became a facilitating mechanism for the translator's actions during the translation process, given that there was little room for resistance or conflict between the translator and the publisher.

I also asked James Currey about the target readership of the *AWS* publications. This was to enable me to understand the extent to which the anticipated reception was influential in the commissioning of the translations of *UVB* and *LVNM*. He again referred me to his book for an answer, and it revealed that the publications of the *AWS* were mainly destined for the book markets of the British colonies in Africa, but also for the international literary markets (Currey, 2008:3). The publisher's intention was thus to change the perception that books in Africa were only destined for the educational sector and not for the leisure of African readers or their general understanding of the realities of life on the continent (Currey, 2008:2).

I contend that the *AWS* sought to revolutionise the publishing agenda in Africa, and by so doing shape the mindsets of the target readership into appreciating works written by fellow Africans. The publisher also had the intention to carve a place for African literature in the international literary market to change the public's perception

regarding the inferiority of African literature. In my view the interest of the *AWS* in literature that challenged the cultural, ideological, and political dominance of Africa by the West, positioned the publishing house as an institutional agent of resistance in the conflict between dominating and dominated systems.

This created a favourable context for the actions of John Reed in the translation process, given his personal empathy with resistance literature in general, but also the nature of Oyono's novels, in particular. The success of this agenda was evident in the fact that the *AWS* publications played a major role in African literature being introduced in the curriculum of Western universities (Currey, 2008: xxv). This highlighted the fact that while the literary preferences of the target system constrain the actions of publishing houses, publishers can also introduce new texts to readers in a way that shapes their literary tastes (Bourdieu, 2002). It is in this regard that I argue that translation agency is constrained by the social factors that are prevalent in the field of the translation in which the translation agents operate.

I then asked Currey about the types of texts that were usually chosen for translation by the *AWS*. He responded that the *AWS* depended on a group of advisors on deciding which works were most appropriate for translation. These advisors were usually literary critics, educators, writers, and translators. To ensure that the translations read fluently in English the publishers used other advisors to advise them in this regard. This indicates that other agents of the field have an influence on the actions of translators in the sense that even when a translator is influential in the initiation of a translation, the process from the selection to the reception of a translation involves other agents of the field who constrain the actions of the translators. It is in this regard that Heilbron and Sapiro (2007:101) assert that the translation of a literary work is shaped by the agents of intermediation who are situated at different levels of the translation process.

Given the competing interests that underpin the actions of the different agents of the field (Bourdieu, 1985), the actions of these other agents situated in different positions of the field are bound to constrain the translator's agency. It is thus my contention that the literary field in which *UVB* and *LVNM* were translated involved different agents of intermediation in different positions of the production network, and the actions of these agents had a bearing on the actions of the translator both at the macro-level and textual level of the translation project.

I asked Currey about the policies that guided the publication of translated works by the *AWS*. He responded that the *AWS* started publishing translations after being advised by John Reed and Clive Wake that there were remarkable books in French that were being published in France and that could also be translated and published by the *AWS*.

Reed and Wake would later become the main translators and translation advisors of the *AWS* and translated works would play a major role in the success of the *AWS* (Currey, 2008:59). The role of Reed and Wake in this situation underscores the fact that the actions of the translator agent are not limited to the textual level, but also take place at the macro-textual level of the translation process. The fact that the publishers had not known about the existence of a rich African literature in French until they were informed by the translators (Currey, 2008:59), demonstrates that rather than being neutral conduits of message transfer from one language to another, translators are agents who are involved in translation projects at different levels of the process. This is in line with Baker's assertion that as agents, many translators do initiate their own translation projects and actively select texts for translation (Baker, 2006:105).

The fact that the publishers accepted Reed's advice demonstrates that trust had been established between him and the publishers, which came as result of the prior opinion the publishers had of the translator, given that they had been working together before in the production of original literature in the target language (Currey, 2008:59). In other words, Reed had accumulated cultural and symbolic capital through the course of his experiences in the literary field and this capital was influential in making the publishers embrace his ideology. This underscores the fact that the extent to which the translator's actions can have an impact on the field depends on the amount of cultural and symbolic capital s/he has accumulated in a field of activity.

Heilbron and Sapiro (2007:102) have argued that the literary translator is different from other translators because s/he usually doubles as a literary critic or academic and this gives him/her a stronger individualism in translational interactions. It is in this regard that I argue that Reed's influence in the initiation of the translation project was facilitated by his multifunctional capacity, which enabled him to act as an advisor and translator at the same time. The fact that he was an advisor to the

publisher on foreign works put him in position to significantly influence the selection of the texts which he deemed good for translation. It also suggests that he had more freedom in decision-making at the textual level of the translation, since there was little likelihood that his translational choices would be questioned.

I also questioned Currey about what motivated the AWS's commissioning of the translations of *UVB* and *LVNM*. Bourdieu (1985) argues that the actions of agents are always motivated by the interest they seek to accrue from the field. I therefore sought to know the interest that motivated the publisher's decision to publish the translations of the two novels. His response was that the novels were outstanding when compared to English literature published in Britain and the United States of America (USA) and they were also humorous and addressed critical social issues. The answer indicated that the publisher's interest in producing the English translations of the novels was both economic and ideological. The AWS wanted works that could meet international standards so that the works would sell in the global market and generate economic capital for the publishing house. In the same vein, the publisher's appreciation of the social issues addressed by the novels is an indication of the alignment of the works with his ideological interest. This implies that the publisher was not only interested in economic capital accumulation but was also an agent of ideological propagation. Currey's response to my question was obviously based on the report that Reed had submitted to AWS in order to influence their decision to publish the translations of the novels, since they did not know of the existence of the two novels prior to being advised by Reed and Wake. The report indicated that "both books are extremely funny, yet at the same time a comment even bitterer than Beti's on the colonial regime in the Cameroons" (Currey, 2008:60).

Reed's report suited the agenda of the publishers, which was aimed at producing literature that was resistant to the cultural, ideological, and political domination of Africa by the West. This implies that had the novels been based on issues not related to the publishers' area of interest, they might have been rejected and the translations would not have been produced. This highlights the dialectic nature of agency in which agents mutually influence each other. The translator influenced the publisher's decision in the selection process of the translation, and the decision to commissioning of the translations led to the textual actions of the translator. This underscores the fact that the agency of translators is not limited to the textual level of

the translation process, as they also actively take part in the selection process (Baker, 2006; Tymoczko, 2007).

I then asked Currey about the nature of the negotiations that went on between the publisher and the translator prior to the commencement of the project. Bourdieu (1985) asserts that the relationship between the different agents of a field are characterised by a struggle for competing interests. This implies that translation action takes place within the context of a network of power relations, which have an influence on the translator's actions. The aim of my question was therefore to find out the power relations that existed between the publisher and the translator, and the impact that it might have had on the translation process. Currey responded that the translations were initiated by Reed himself, who had translated excerpts of one of the novels, and this attracted the attention of the publisher to commission for the translation of the two novels.

The interview with the translator reveals more details about the transactional aspect of the project as it indicates that the final decision was based on the report he was asked to submit, which convinced the publisher regarding the content and form of the novels. It also reveals that the publisher and the translator signed a contract containing the cost of the project and the timeframe required for its completion. The implication of this is that the macro-textual level transactions, which are social in nature, have an impact in the actions of translation agents, because the transactions create the working conditions of the translation project, which have an influence on the actions of the translator during the translation process (Wolf, 2007b). Financial remuneration reflects the economic capital possessed by the publisher and gives him leverage in the negotiation with the translator on the terms of the project. Also, an unfavourable timeframe for the completion of the project may put the translator under pressure and lead him/her to make decisions that s/he would not have made in a more favourable working context. It is in this regard that I contend that the publisher occupies a higher position in the literary field, which enables him to have a considerable influence on the actions of the translator.

Nord (1997) contends that it is the commissioner of the translation who decides on the guidelines that the translator has to follow to ensure that the translation functions as intended. This implies that the brief is a tool of power in the hands of the commissioner, which constrains the actions of the translator. I therefore sought to

find out if the publisher put in place such mechanisms to constrain the translator's actions. I therefore asked Currey if any guidelines or briefs were given to the translator to guide the translation process. Currey's response was that no guidelines or briefs were given to the translator, since the translator had initiated the translation himself and the publisher had been pleased with the excerpts that had been translated. This again highlights the place of trust in the negotiations that happen between the commissioner and the translator and how the trust factor can influence the extent of the translator's agency. I therefore argue that while the commissioner or publisher is unarguably a powerful agent in the translation network, the extent to which such power can influence the agency of a translator, depends largely on the profile of the translator in question. Had the publisher been dealing with a translator less prolific than Reed, there is a strong likelihood that the level of trust would not have been the same and there would have been more control measures put in place to guide the translation process. I therefore contend that Reed's symbolic capital was an influential factor during his transactions with the publisher.

I equally questioned Currey about the quality assessment of the translations before publication. This was to enable me to understand the extent to which the translator's actions at textual level met the expectations of the publisher. His response was that there was trust in the fact the translations would be good because they knew that Reed was working in consultation with Clive Wake. This once more highlights the extent to which a translator's profile, or symbolic capital, can instil trust in the commissioner or publisher, as well as in the target audience. Such a situation creates more room for the translator's agency, since his/her ability to make decisions is enhanced by the trust factor. In a context of ideological conflict underpinning translation (Baker, 2006), a translator with the level of trust that the publisher gave to Reed becomes a powerful agent who may take decisions to either resist or propagate a particular ideology. In addition to trust, Currey responded that the AWS also relied on the assessment of the advisors of the publishing house, who all testified that the translations read smoothly in English. One of the advisors expressed his opinion on *UVB* in the following words:

I've now read this translation which I consider terrific. As for the diary itself I know nothing quite like it in the use of details, good humoured mischief and precision ...

Somehow, purists will try to guard schools against it – which will be a pity – but the general reader will be acquiring a rare gem in African literature (Currey, 2008:60).

This again highlights the fact that the decisions made by translators during the translation process may be subjected to another centre of power, which may approve or reject it. The translator's agency in this case becomes dependent on the facilitating or constraining factors of the field. It is in this regard that Marais (2014:89) asserts that translation agency has to do with how individual actions influence the actions of other individuals. This implies that the actions of the translator are underpinned by the mutually influential actions of other agents in the field. Had the publisher's advisors not been pleased with the translations, the works may not have been published, or changes would have been made to them prior to publication. Thus, in my view the decisions of these agents of the publishing sector were influential in facilitating the agency of John Reed in the process of translating *UVB* and *LVNM*.

The last question I asked the publisher was about the reception of the published translations. Bourdieu (2002) contends that the expected reception of a literary work is an influential factor in the publisher's selection of a work to be translated, the translator to translate it and the manner by which to present the work to the potential recipients. My intention was therefore to understand the extent to which the translator's decision met the target audience's expectations. Currey responded that the reception was significantly positive as there were excellent reviews in leading journals, good sales to public libraries, and the works were adopted in the curricula of universities in the UK, the Commonwealth, and the USA.

The immense success of the translations could be said to be an indication of the impact of Reed's decisions during the translation process, since every translation targets a receiving audience and the legitimacy of the translator's choices can only come with a positive reception of the resulting product by the target audience. The reception of the translations also highlights the impact of the agency role of the translator in propagating ideology and contributing in shaping the mindset of the receiving culture (Baker, 2006; Milton & Bandia, 2009).

The fact that the translations were read by a vast number of readers implies that the ideological content of the works reached many people and gave them a particular perspective of reality that could influence them in one way or another. It is actually

because of the ideological underpinnings of translations that there has been political censorship of some translated works. Such was the case with Mongo Beti's English translation of *Mission Terminée* (1957), which provoked an uproar when it was included in the school curriculum in East Africa as result of the sexual and anti-religious content of the novel, leading to the novel being finally pulled out of the syllabus because of the protests (Currey, 2008).

It was certainly with this in mind that Currey, in his response, added that he was surprised that the apartheid regime in South Africa did not ban the translation of *UVB* because of the relationship between the houseboy and the white boss. This suggests that the publisher was conscious of the ideological content of the works, and by accepting to publish it he was promoting the ideological content, which made him a facilitating factor to the translator's agency. It could thus be argued that the reception of the translations of *UVB* and *LVNM* highlights the way translation agents construct, and are constructed, by their social context in the sense that while the expected reception of the translations may constrain the actions of the publisher and the translator, the choices of the translator and publisher also shape recipients' literary tastes. This underscores the dialectic relationship that exists between agents and their field of activities (Bourdieu, 1977).

#### **4.3.2.2 The translator-agent of *UVB* and *LVNM* in English**

This section focuses on the analysis of the results from my interview with John Reed, who translated *UVB* and *LVNM* into English.

I questioned John Reed about how he became involved in translation with the intent to discover how his historical experience could have contributed in moulding his translational habitus. He responded that he encountered the act of translation initially through the translation exercises he did as a student. He started translating professionally while working in Zambia (Northern Rhodesia), when Oxford University Press commissioned him and Wake to translate Senghor's poems into English. After this, he and Wake were again contracted by Currey to translate the works of African Francophone poets into English. This is an important point in that it is the same publisher who commissioned the translations of *UVB* and *LVNM*. The implication in this case is that he had acquired a significant amount of symbolic capital as result of his earlier translations and this made the publisher to believe that his translations of

Oyono's novels would be a good business decision. Reed also revealed that he had translated other novels and poems by Francophone Africans, as well as poems from German and Latin. An important revelation from Reed was that he not only translated when commissioned, but initiated translations for his own interest and pleasure. His English translations of the works of German and Latin poets were not commissioned by anyone, but were initiated by his own interest.

It is worthy to note that these German and Latin translations were never published, and in my view the reason was because the works could not attract the interest of the field in which he was working, given that the dominant trend in the African literary field at the time was the publication of works by African authors aimed at addressing the socio-political and cultural realities of African communities. What is relevant about Reed's historical profile is that he had a genuine interest in literature, and his competence in different languages had exposed him to different literary cultures. According to Venuti (2013:13), these are relevant assets to a translator, and they need to be explored to facilitate an understanding of the translator's agency during the translation process, given that the cultural and linguistic resources that a translator internalises during the course of his/her career constitute the translator's latent thinking and manifests itself spontaneously during the translation process. This is in line with Bourdieu's concept of habitus which is the internalised history of independent agents that functions as the mechanism of perception and action (Bourdieu, 1990:56). It is thus my argument that Reed's past experiences in the translation of literary works had endowed him with a translational habitus that was influential in his translations of *UVB* and *LVNM*.

I also asked Reed about his interest in African literature in general, and the works of Ferdinand Oyono, in particular. The aim was to establish his ideological position vis-à-vis the source and target text and see the extent to which this influenced his decisions during the translation process. Bourdieu (1985) contends that the actions of agents are always underpinned by the interest that they seek to accumulate in the field. It is in this regard that Baker (2006) has underscored the fact that acts of translation always involve the mediation of ideology and the decisions made by the translator are influenced by his/her position in relation to the ideology in question. Reed responded that his interest came as result of 17 years of experience in teaching English in Southern Africa, since literature was part of the English

curriculum. His work thus exposed him to African literature, which most likely ended up shaping his perspective of African writings in a certain manner.

About Oyono, Reed responded that he was attracted to Oyono's novels because of the style, as well as the colonial experiences they contained and which he could identify with since they were similar to what was happening politically and socially in Zimbabwe where he was working. It could thus be argued that Reed's African experience had enabled him to develop a habitus that could appreciate the literary and ideological norms of the African literary field at the time. Bourdieu asserts that when an agent's habitus is aligned with the structure of the field, the agent functions with the ease of a fish in water (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:127). I would therefore argue that Reed's exposure to African literature and colonial experience had endowed him with a habitus that shaped his actions as an interested "representer of the source words of others" (Munday, 2012:2), since he could relate to what African societies were going through, and what African writers were addressing in their works. Reed was therefore not simply a linguistic mediator between two literary systems but was very much an interested agent who aimed to disseminate and promote African literature and its inherent ideologies. This underscores the dialectic nature of agency in the sense that Reed was constructed by his social context, and at the same time his work was contributing to constructing the same social environment.

The next question to the translator had to do with the initiation of the translation project. This was because research in translation studies has underscored the role of translator-agents at the initiation stage of translation projects (Baker, 2006; Nord, 1997; Venuti, 2013). A translation always starts with the initiation of the project by an individual or institution that has a particular interest in having the translation produced. In most cases this is done by a commissioner, who may be a publisher, a political institution, or an interested individual. However, translators have been said to initiate their own projects for one reason or another (Baker, 2006; Venuti, 2013).

It was in this regard that I sought to know who initiated the translations of *UVB* and *LVNM*. John Reed responded that he had initiated the translations by translating excerpts of *LVNM* in an article which he published in the *Makerere Journal 7*, titled "Between two worlds: some notes on the presentation by African novelists of the individual in modern African society" (Reed, 1963:1-14), which aimed to demonstrate

the psychological trauma that indigenous Africans suffered at the hands of European colonisers. This indicates that the initiation came as result of the translator's interest in contributing to the agenda of resistance to the colonial system that was recurrent in the 1950s and 1960s.

When one considers the dominant themes of the works published by the AWS, it becomes obvious that the publisher's interest in the translation was not only related to the flow in the style of the translation, but also in the ideology of the source text author, which was harmonious with the ideology that he was selling in his publications and which indeed was feeding a burgeoning appetite and market for anticolonial literature. The translator in this situation contributed in the propagation of this resistance discourse by initiating a project that would have far-reaching impact on the anticolonial literary field of the target language. This, in itself, indicates an agency role of the translator who can decide to translate a particular work or not, so as to either support or contest a particular ideology. It is in this light that Gentzler and Tymoczko (2002:xxi) assert that translation is "a deliberate and conscious act of selection, assemblage, structuration, and fabrication". In the same light, Baker (2006:105) highlights the fact that rather than being "passive receivers of assignments", many translators and interpreters actually "initiate their own translation projects and actively select texts and volunteer for interpreting tasks that contribute to the elaboration of particular narratives". I would therefore argue that Reed was an agent whose actions contributed to constructing the African literary field. This was possible due to his position as a literary scholar whose critical work attracted the interest of the AWS, as well as a translator whose translation actions contributed in shaping the target literary field.

I then questioned the translator about his relationship with the source texts' world so as to know how this could have influenced his understanding and transfer of the source texts. His response was that he neither had any contact with the author nor the publisher of the source texts. Bourdieu (2002) asserts that the production of original and translated works is influenced by different social factors, which must be taken into consideration when interpreting the works. Venuti (2013) has also argued that what the translator transfers to the target language is in fact his/her interpretation of the source text. Such an interpretation would depend on the nature of the contact between the translator and the source text world. This implies that a full grasp of the

context of the production of a source text is necessary for the interpretation of the text.

It is in this regard that Bandia (2008:161) has underscored the fact that the peculiar nature of African literature requires that any translation of such literature be carried out by a translator who is “intimately familiar with the logos of African culture”, because a European translator “may not be able to internalize the deep structures of African sociocultural reality”. Reed’s physical experience of Africa was mostly in Southern Africa where he lived and worked; he only scantily travelled to other parts of Africa, without ever being to Cameroon where the novels are set. It is thus my view that his grasp of the source texts could not be the same as that of someone who had lived in the sociocultural setting of the source texts.

Sturge (2007:22,24) argues that in order to have a comprehensive understanding of the source text culture, an “emic approach” is necessary, because meaning is context specific, and as such its representation should be done “through an interpretative reconstruction of the original words’ linguistic context, cultural context and immediate setting”. To therefore say that exposure to one part of Africa is sufficient to fully grasp the sociocultural realities of other parts of the continent is holding onto the erroneous assumption that Africa is homogeneous. It could, however, be argued that the years of exposure to African literature had given Reed significant insight into the embedded realities of African literature.

This is particularly relevant in the sense that, as he stated in his response, he had been exposed to many works of Francophone and Anglophone literature produced by African authors and could fully grasp the world views of different African writers. Furthermore, the fact that most of the works of African literature that were translated between European languages were read and studied as originals in the target cultures (Bandia, 2008:160), may imply that there was a high degree of similarities between the African world views of the different colonial communities. It is thus worth asserting that even though Reed’s familiarity with African literature enabled him to understand the world view of Oyono’s source texts, this may not have been enough to give him a full grasp of the source texts world, and an analysis of the product will reveal how this influenced the nature of his intervention at the textual level.

I further asked Reed about the practical decisions and actions he took during the translation process. This was to enable me to relate these actions and decisions to the social context within which he was working to understand the factors that influenced those decisions. His response was that he was first asked to submit a specimen of a few pages to the publisher and when it was approved, he started translating the novels manually and page by page. This must have put a significant amount of pressure on the translator and might have had a bearing on his decision-making in the transfer process. He also said that he was given four months within which to finish the first novel and he finished it within the slated timeframe.

While I cannot ascertain whether translating manually and the timeframe allocated were convenient or not, they give an indication of the conditions under which the translator worked, and it is my contention that working conditions have an influence on the decisions made by a translator during the translation process. Unfavourable working conditions may lead to stress, which may influence the translator to make choices that s/he might not have made in more favourable working conditions. Although technological advancements of today have significantly enhanced translators' ability to deliver results in tight deadlines, since translators now have computers and facilitating software to make their work easier, I contend that the issue of working conditions remains significant in the translation industry, even though it has not received much attention from translation research. Another important information from Reed was that during the course of the translation, he consulted Wake on issues relating to the French language. This implies that Reed's decisions at some point were likely influenced by the advice received from Wake.

The relevance of this is that it raises the issue of teamwork in translation studies, given that translators do not always work individually, but may work as teams for the same translation project. Such a situation is likely to lead to a conflict of agency positions, since the translators involved would be individuals who may not have been socialised in the same way. In the case where the agents involved share the same objective, the situation will lead to what Palumbo (2009:9) calls 'collective agency', which is a situation in which agents of the same field have similar habitus and interest. Given that Reed and Wake had been working together on many translation projects, it is my view that they had collective habitus and interest rather than conflicting ones. This was evident in the fact that the decision to seek Wake's advice

was made by Reed himself and not imposed on him, which implies that he chose Wake because he knew that they shared something in common as far as African literature and translation were concerned. It is in this regard that I would argue that Reed's relationship with other agents of the literary field had an influence on his actions during the translation process.

I additionally asked Reed about the way he handled the issue of cultural transfer and the challenges he faced therein. This was to enable me to find out which interventions he made in order to represent the cultural aspects of the source texts in the target language, given that translation is not only a linguistic exercise, but also involves the mediation of the cultural realities underpinning the languages concerned (Bandia, 2008:161). He responded that he did not find it difficult because French and English functioned similarly, if not identically, in their colonial settings.

Again, this indicates an assumption of homogeneity in the colonial experiences of Africa. It is worth recalling that the French and British colonial systems differed significantly from each other, implying that the language of the coloniser functioned differently too (Abdulaziz, 2003:185). The French policy was that of assimilation, which aimed to convert Africans into black French persons. There was thus a vigorous policy of cultural transformation aimed at eroding the African culture and replacing it with that of the French. Africans were therefore educated to dress, eat, talk, and even think like the French. The French language was to be embraced by the colonised Africans, leading to a process of domestication of the language, especially among the uneducated. The result was a French version that was limited to a specific sociocultural region. The British colonial system, on the other hand, implemented an indirect rule system without attempting to transform the culture of the colonised. In this case, English was more a language of administration and education; it was never intended to replace the African languages (Abdulaziz, 2003:185).

This difference in functionality implies that the local varieties of French and English that emerged in the respective colonial settings, were different in nature. Reed's assertion that the French and English colonial systems were closely similar can be said to be presumptuous and such an impression might have led to misinterpretations of certain aspects of the source texts, which might have impacted the translation choices he made. Reed did, however, admit that he encountered

challenges dealing with terms relating to climatic seasons, given that he was more familiar with the seasons of Southern Africa and might have confused them in his translations. This underscores what has been raised before, that a translator needs to be quite familiar with the source text world in order to fully grasp it and represent it in the target language. He also admitted that he faced a challenge on the translation of French titles, since there were no direct equivalence and thus resorted to maintaining the French titles in the translations. Such a decision inevitably led to the creation of new linguistic forms in the target language. Milton and Bandia (2009) have argued that translators are agents whose choices contribute in shaping the literary poetics of the target system. It could therefore be said that Reed's lexical choices in the translation process contributed in shaping the already heteroglossic nature of English in the African colonies.

The next question to Reed had to do with the target audience for which his translations were destined. This is significant in that the receiving culture of a literary work is instrumental in determining the strategies that the translator adopts during the transfer process (Even-Zohar, 1978; Hermans, 2007; Nord, 1991a; Toury, 1995). In this regard, Bourdieu (2002) argues that the recipients of translated works interpret the texts in accordance with the norms of the field of reception. This implies that decision-making in the translation process is required to take into account the target readers' expectations. I therefore sought to know the extent to which the target audience influenced the choices that Reed made in the translation process. He responded that for each novel a hardback edition was produced for the international literary audience and a paperback edition for the African market. The hardback version was published under Heinemann in the UK, while the paperback was published under the AWS. The two readership audiences in this case were different, since the African audience had expectations like to be different from those of the international audience. It is, however, my view that the AWS publications that were destined for the global market were meant to occupy peripheral positions in the global literary poly-system (Even-Zohar, 1978), and, as such, the main target audience of the AWS remained the African readership. In response to how he sought to satisfy his audience, Reed stated that he intended to produce English versions of the texts that would give the readers an experience corresponding to that of a Francophone reader of Oyono's originals.

The question that arises in this regard is to know how Reed could ascertain the impression of the 'Francophone reader' without carrying out a study to find out if all Francophone readers have the same impression of a novel written in French. I would argue that Reed's assessment of the original audience response to the original texts was presumptuous, and he relied on his personal impression to make the assessment. This is compounded by the fact that he admitted to never having read any informative or critical works on Oyono's novels before translating them. It could therefore be said that he was interpreting the social context of the source text with a habitus that had been developed in a different context or field. This is in line with Venuti's (2013) assertion that what a translator translates is not so much the message of the source text as his/her interpretation of it. It could thus be argued that what Reed transferred to the target language culture was his perception of Oyono's world view to the target language, and this perception had been shaped by the habitus underpinning his understanding of the source texts' realities.

The following question I put to Reed had to do with the aftermath of the translation and its reception by the target audience. Bourdieu (2002) contends that the actions taken during the translation process have an influence on the reception of a translated work by the target readers. I therefore sought to know Reed's perception of the impact of his decisions on the receiving culture. He responded that upon completing the translations he sent the typescripts to the publisher where they were edited for grammar and readability, but not for accuracy. What this implies is that target language fluency is the hallmark of the reception of translated literary works. It is in this regard that Even-Zohar (1978), Hermans (2007) and Toury (1995) have argued that factors of the target system constrain translation. I, however, argue with Bourdieu (2002) as well as Milton and Bandia (2009) that the strategic choices made during the translation process can shape the target audience reception of translated works. This is because literary taste is socially constructed, and individuals appreciate cultural products based on the works they have been historically exposed to (Bourdieu, 1984). Reed also said that he did not receive any feedback on the editing, and this implies that the publisher either accepted everything he submitted as satisfactory or made corrections to the target texts without consulting him. The fact that he did not say that he noticed any changes to his translations when they were published means that his submissions were accepted as they were.

This again highlights the role of the network of agents in influencing actions in the literary field. I would contend that Reed's symbolic capital had put him in an influential position in the literary field, and this made it possible for the other agents to have trust in his decisions. His translation agency was thus facilitated by the position he occupied in the field, and the capital he had accumulated in the course of his professional life. With regard to the successful reception of his translations, he said that the reception was positive since the works had long print runs in the UK as well as the USA. What this indicates is that the actions taken during the translation process met the expectations of the target readership and it highlights the impact of Reed's agency in shaping the target audience's construction of reality. It could be argued that Reed's actions had such a positive reception because his professional experience had endowed him with a habitus that was harmonious to the norms of the Anglophone African literary field. The task of translating to an audience, to which he had significant exposure was thus like "a fish in water" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:127).

Concerning remuneration for his services, Reed informed me that upon completing the project, he was paid his due in a lump sum, as was the practice. In this regard, he received £100 for *UVB* and £150 for *LVNM*. The royalties from the published translations went to the author of the original texts and the translator's name was printed on every copy that was produced and sold. While it is not my intention to say whether the amount paid, and the manner of payment were appropriate, the issue of remuneration is an important one as it highlights the place of economic power in translation activities. The translator's agency may be influenced by the prospect of economic benefits that may lead him/her to shift allegiances in the context of conflicting ideologies. I contend that translators do have economic needs just like other professionals, and situations may arise in which these needs conflict with the translators' personal ideologies. Translation studies therefore needs to explore the role economic power plays in positioning a translator as an agent of the translation process and, in order to do so, it should take into consideration how this role may differ from one society to another.

The economic situation of the West is different from that of developing countries and, as such, the impact of economic power on the translators would not be the same. It would be difficult for a translator in Africa whose immediate priority is to

satisfy his/her economic needs to adopt the same resistance stance to translation in the face of ideological conflict like Venuti or Baker would do. In the same way, a translator who translates for leisure would be more likely to assert his/her agency than one who translates for a living. In the case of Reed, evidence points to the fact that translation was not his primary activity and the money that came from it could not have had any significant impact on his literary and ideological interests. The issue of royalties of translation works going to the author of the original works also highlights the extent to which translators and translations are made invisible in the field of literary production. It is my contention that this marginalisation of translators is as result of the ignorance of consumers of translated works with regard to the creative choices that underpin the translation process. It is in this regard that Venuti (2013:244) asserts that:

Despite recent generations of highly accomplished translators, despite the existence of awards and cultural organizations that recognize and support the work of translators, despite the emergence of translation studies as an area of research and teaching in academic institutions, the fact is that literary translation continues to be grossly misunderstood, undervalued if not discounted or neglected, and persistently exploited.

This implies that translation occupies a subordinate position in the literary field, as it is perceived to be nothing but a mechanism of transfer from one linguistic system to another. It is for this reason that some scholars (Baker, 2006; Tymoczko, 2007; Venuti, 2013) have advocated for more agency on the part of the translator as a means to change the perception of the discipline and minimise the level of its marginalisation. It is, however, my contention that such assertiveness on the part of translators will depend on the context within which they work, because their actions will be constrained by the social factors of their contexts of operation.

The interviews with John Reed and James Currey thus highlighted the actions of the publisher and the translator in the process of producing *UVB* and *LVNM* in English. This has implications for translation agency, which will be discussed in the next section.

#### 4.3.2.3 Implications for agency in translation studies

In this section, I intend to demonstrate the implications which the analysis of the context of producing the translations of *UVB* and *LVNM* has for agency in translation studies. The analysis was done on the basis that an agent's actions are constrained by factors in the field within which the agent operates. These factors are the positions that make up the field, the agents involved, the habitus of the agents and the capital they possess (Bourdieu, 1984). It was in this regard that the translator and publisher were interviewed, with the aim of understanding how they constructed and were constructed by the social context in which they worked. The findings of the analysis revealed significant implications for the agency role of translators at macro-textual and micro-textual levels of translation activities.

The first agency implication from the data was that of the context of agency. The context is important because, as it has been argued throughout this study, translation agency is foregrounded in the mutually influential and causal relationship between the social context of translation phenomena and the actions of the agents involved. It is in this regard that I argue for a Bourdieusian approach to the study of agency, because it views agency not only in light of the conflict between the individual and the context, but rather in light of the interdependency of the two (Bourdieu, 1977). This implies that the agency of a translator is constrained by the context within which s/he operates, as that is the space in which his/her capital and habitus can exert influence, since the same influence may not have the same effect in a different context.

The African literary context within which Reed worked had shaped his habitus and enabled him to accumulate relevant capital. This put him in an influential position in the literary field and facilitated his ability to exert his agency at all levels of the translation project. I believe that if Reed had to translate in a different context, he would not have been able to exert the same influence as he did in the translations of *UVB* and *LVNM*. This highlights the fact that different sociocultural contexts need to be taken into account when conceptualising agency in translation studies (Marais, 2014; Tymoczko, 2007).

Another important implication for agency that can be drawn from the analysis has to do with the extent of translators' involvement in translation projects. Baker (2006)

and Venuti (2013) assert that translators are not just passive receivers of assignments, but they can initiate their own translation projects. It is my contention that the extent of the translator's involvement depends on his/her context of operation and the level of influence s/he has in the said context. John Reed was the main initiator of the translations in that he translated part of the works for his own purpose before the translation caught the interest of the publisher who then commissioned him to translate the two novels. By translating an excerpt of one of the novels, he gave visibility to the source text and it was this visibility that led to the two novels being translated and subsequently being read by the wide audience that the translations attained. It could be argued that had Reed published the article containing the translated excerpt in a different context, it would not have attracted the same attention.

It is for this reason that I have argued that his translations of Latin and German works were never published because they did not fit into the expectations of the African literary field in which he was working. Furthermore, the fact that Reed, as an advisor to the *AWS*, also influenced the publisher of the existence of interesting literary works in French, meant that his involvement in the selection of works for translation was influential, given that his advice led to the *AWS* commissioning the translations of many works written by Francophone writers, among which were *UVB* and *LVNM*. This highlights the fact that the translator's agency is not limited to the textual level but can extend to the initiation level of translation (Baker, 2006; Tymoczko, 2007; Venuti, 2013).

Therefore, from my viewpoint, Reed's involvement at the initiation level was facilitated by the position he occupied in the literary field. His role as an academic, a critic, an advisor and a translator endowed him with significant symbolic capital which enabled him to be an influential agent at different levels of the translation process. It is in this regard that I maintain that the agency of the translators of literary works tends to be more significant than with other translators because, beside translations, literary translators usually perform other functions in the literary field (Bourdieu, 2002). This underscores my argument for a context-specific approach to the study of agency in translation studies.

The translator's interactions with the publisher also highlighted an aspect of agency. The agency of an individual is always foregrounded in the individual's ability

to exert an influence over the other agents of the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:98). Throughout his interactions with the publisher, Reed exerted significant influence on the latter, given that most of his suggestions were rarely contested. Reed's background as an expert in African literature had endowed him with the cultural and symbolic capital that translated into the trust shown in him by the publisher. This highlights the fact that the translator's ability to have leverage on a translation project depends on the profile of the translator, given that the commissioner may not show the same amount of trust in one translator as s/he would show in another. What this implies is that the conceptualisation of agency in translation studies does not only have to look at the context, but also needs to consider the individual profiles of translator-agents, since the identity of the translator inevitably affects his/her ability to exert influence on other agents.

Another important aspect of agency that emerged from the analysis of the context of the translation was the target audience reception as a centre of power against which to measure the translator's agency. Bourdieu (2002) has argued that since a translated work does not travel with its original context, translation agents should consider the expectations of the target audience in making decisions during the translation process. A translation is meant to be read and if it is not read, then the translator's agency is destined for a stillbirth. It is therefore the target audience's acceptance of a translation that legitimises the translator's agency by enabling it to impact on the readership in an intended or unintended manner. The wide acceptability of the translations of *UVB* and *LVNM* enabled Reed's actions to reach its finality and highlights his agency in the construction of reality by shaping the mindsets of the target readers (Milton & Bandia, 2009). What this means for translation studies is that the target audience can either legitimise or limit the impact of a translator's agency, and my argument is that the finality of a translator's agency depends on the constraining factors prevalent in the context within which the translator operates.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter was to analyse the context of the production of the English translations of *UVB* and *LVNM*. It began with an explanation of the methodology that was adopted for the study. This was then followed by an analysis of the data pertaining to the field of the translations' production and the roles of the publisher-

agent and the translator-agent in the translation project. The aim was to understand the actions of the agents at the macro-level of the translation process. The analysis revealed that rather than being an invisible conduit in the translations of *UVB* and *LVNM*, Reed was an active agent who was involved in decision-making from the initiation to the finalisation level of the project. His agency was foregrounded in a dialectic causal relationship in which he constructed and was constructed by his social context. The next chapter focuses on Reed's decisions at the textual level and their impact on the translation product.

## **TRANSLATING THE CULTURAL WORLDVIEW OF *UNE VIE DE BOY* AND *LE VIEUX NÈGRE ET LA MÉDAILLE* INTO ENGLISH**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter seeks to analyse the impact of the translator's agency at the textual level of the translation process. Having established the translator's agency in the field of the translation activity in the previous chapter, this chapter looks at how the translator's agency manifested itself in the choices he made in transferring the cultural worldview of *UVB* and *LVNM* into English. This is done through a comparative analysis of the culture-bound terms in the source texts and their translations in the target texts. The analysis is done by using the Bourdieusian concepts of field and habitus, which offers us the tools to understand the mutually influential relationship between translation actions at the textual level and the factors of the field in which the translator works. The chapter starts by looking at the methodological approach that was used in collecting and analysing the data, followed by an overview of the novels under study, before delving into the analysis of the data.

### **5.2 Methodology**

This section focuses on the method that was used to collect the data analysed in this chapter, as well as the tools that were used in the analysis. It therefore looks at culture-bound terms, which make up the data, and the concept of habitus, which is the concept used in analysing the data.

#### **5.2.1 Data collection: Culture-bound terms**

The textual level analysis of this study focused on culture-bound terms selected from *UVB* and *LVNM* and their translations into English. I chose culture-bound terms because these terms are embedded in the source-text cultures, and their translations into a foreign cultural system can be very challenging to translators (Baker, 2011; Newmark, 1988). Culture-bound terms are words which express a concrete or an abstract concept which may be unknown in the target language culture (Baker, 2011). These terms therefore pose translation challenges because of the absence of direct equivalence for them in the target culture. The explanation as to what constitutes culture-bound terms has been provided by different translation scholars

(Baker, 2011; Ivir, 2004; Newmark, 1988). Newmark (1988) has classified them into ecology, organisations, customs, ideas, material culture, gestures, habits, and social culture. Baker (2011:21), on her part, categorises them into religious beliefs, social customs or types of food. The use and translation of culture-bound terms in literature has attracted the attention of research in translation studies. In this regard, Nord (1991a) has looked at the translation of culture-specific items in the translation of German literature, and Davies (2003) has studied the translation of culture-specific references in the Harry Potter books into different languages.

With regard to African literature, Kruger (2012) has focused on the translation of cultural aspects in children's literature in South Africa; Bandia (2008) has elaborated on the cultural underpinnings of translating Francophone African literature into English; and Suh (2005) has looked at the translation of culture-bound terms in the self-translation of the plays of Guillaume Oyono Mbia. These scholars, with the exception of Suh (2005), do not elaborate on the classification of culture-bound terms, but rather discuss the concept as part of the issues related to the translation of cultural components in literature. Suh (2005:144) classifies culture-bound terms into the following categories: ideophones, distorted words and names, loan words from Oyono Mbia's native Bulu language, proverbs and wise sayings, swearwords, allusions and symbolic signifiers, forms of address, repetition, and stylistic calques. In my view, the classification of culture-bound terms by these scholars overlaps, as they generally consider the same concepts, even though they may refer to them in different words. I, however, think that Suh's (2005) categorisation is more relevant to this study because it applies to the same Cameroonian and Bulu sociocultural context, which is the setting of the two novels of this study. It is in this light that I draw on his categorisation for this study, and then add terms which are, in my view, not covered by his categorisation.

Regarding the translation of culture-bound terms, different approaches have been suggested by translation researchers (Baker, 2011; Ivir, 2004; Nord, 1991a; Venuti, 1995). In this regard, Baker (2011) proposes a list of strategies that can be adopted, ranging from cultural substitution, omission, paraphrase, and the use of loan words. Similarly, Ivir (2004) argues that the challenge of translating culture-bound terms can be met with the use of strategies such as borrowing, definition, literal translation, substitution, lexical creation, addition, and omission. Nord (1991a)

argues for a target reader-oriented approach by focusing on how different strategies are used in translating culture-specific items, depending on the age, social status, or educational background of the target readers. Venuti (1995) offers a broader perspective to meeting the challenge of translating culture-bound terms in his foreignisation *versus* domestication approach, in which he argues that the strategies that a translator adopts are determined by whether such a translator seeks to be source-text or target-text oriented.

In other words, the strategies proposed by Baker (2011) and Ivir (2004) can fit well into Venuti's approaches as each would either give the translation a foreignised or domesticated outlook. While the aim of this study is not to elaborate on the translation strategies of culture-bound terms that have been exposed in translation studies, it is worth mentioning that Venuti's approach has been quite influential in translation studies (Myskja, 2013). While some critics of the approach have argued that a translation cannot be wholly foreignised or domesticated (Tymoczko, 2007:211), it is my opinion that Venuti's notions have to be seen in terms of predominance and not absoluteness. In other words, a text cannot be absolutely foreignised or domesticated, but can portray an outlook that is predominantly foreignised or domesticated. This is relevant to the translation of African literature in that it has been described as a form of translation, which foreignises the cultural world view of the author, and its translation needs to adopt a similar foreignising approach in order to continue maintaining the said cultural world view (Bandia, 2008). I contend that the decision to foreignise or domesticate, is an issue of agency in which the translator's choice is constrained by factors in the literary field in which s/he works, as well as his/her individual habitus. It is in this regard that I use the concepts of field and habitus to analyse the translations of culture-bound terms in *UVB* and *LVNM* into English.

### **5.2.2 Data selection criteria**

In analysing the translation of culture-bound terms, it is necessary to first classify the terms under different categories before selecting the specific examples to be analysed (Alkhawaja, 2014). It is in this regard that I first read *UVB* and *LVNM* to manually pick out the culture-bound terms in the novels and then I read the published translation of the novels, *Houseboy (HB)* and *The Old Man and The Medal (TOMM)*, to pick out the translations of the culture-bound terms. I then drew on Suh's (2005)

categorisation to classify the culture-bound terms used in *UVB* and *LVNM*, to which I added terms that I thought were not covered by his classification. I therefore came up with the following categories for the analysis: proverbs, idioms, ideophones and expressive lengthening, forms of address, vernacular words, distorted words, invectives, and names to which I added semantic shifts and hybrid language formations (see also Bandia, 2008). Finally, I added a category for race-related terms, because I believe the perception of otherness in race relations is culture-specific as it has to do with the attitude of a people towards other people and cultures (Faiq, 2004). After classifying the culture-bound terms into different categories, I then randomly selected examples from each category in an extensive manner, to ensure that there was representativeness and reliability in the data selected.

### **5.2.3 Data analysis: Field and habitus**

Habitus-based analysis of textual level processes of translation is increasingly attracting the interest of sociological-oriented translation scholars (Gouanvic, 2005; Sela-Sheffy, 2014; Yannakopoulou, 2008; Wolf, 2013). The argument for this analytical approach is that a textual and discourse-oriented analysis tends to focus on norms that guide the translator's strategies and do not consider the impact of the translator's agency in decision-making in the translation process, which seems to imply that the translator remains submissive to the dictate of the norms (Gouanvic, 2005).

Habitus-oriented scholars thus argue that the micro-textual analysis of translation need to focus on the translator's habitus rather than on the translational norms, because translation strategies are not always the result of deliberate objective choices but come from subjective and unconscious decisions made by the translator. In this regard, Gouanvic (2005) has underscored the role of the social trajectories of translators in influencing the decisions that they make during the process of a translation activity. He contends that it is important to trace these trajectories to understand the decisions made by translators, because the said social trajectories are the constitutive elements of the habitus that underpins the actions of translators. Yannakopoulou (2008) also argues that while translation studies as a field has recently focused on the concept of habitus. This focus has mostly concentrated at the contextual level of the translation process, with little being done at the micro-level. She does argue that a habitus-based analysis of the macro-level and micro-level

translation practices would shed more light on the factors that influence translation strategies, than analytical approaches that are limited to the context. The significance in her argument lies in the fact that she highlights the importance of not limiting sociological analyses of translations to the contextual factors, but also to consider micro-level factors.

This argument is relevant to this study in that an integrated approach is adopted in which the analysis focused on both the context of the translation production and the micro-textual processes of the translation products. Simeoni (1998) has also argued that, rather than seeing norms and habitus as separate angles of translation analysis, they should be associated with each other because norms are in fact the result of the collective habitus of the agents of a particular translation field. This implies that norms that guide translators' strategies come as result of the experiences to which the translators of a given field have been historically exposed. It is thus their collective habitus that leads to the establishment of rules, the norms that condition perceptions, and actions in the field of translation. On her part, Wolf (2013) has asserted that translation decisions can be explained by looking at the habitus of the translator involved in a specific historical moment. In terms of literary translators, she contends that external factors have an impact on the development of the translators' habitus, since many of them practice translation as a second profession. Her argument is significant in that it highlights the fact that the habitus is heterogeneous in nature, and the habitus acquired from another field can cause an action in a specific field.

It is in line with the arguments elaborated above that this study adopts a habitus-based approach to analyse the translations of John Reed. This is done according to Bourdieu's (1977:86) notion of collective and individual habitus, because it is my view that textual level translation action is influenced by both the habitus that the translator acquires from the field of practice, and his/her individual habitus which s/he acquired before entering the field. Collective habitus refers to the habitus shared by agents of the field who have been exposed to the same experience, while individual habitus refers to the habitus resulting from an individual agent's exposure to experiences that single him/her out of the other agents of the field (Gouanvic, 2010).

This notion has been applied to translation studies to refer to the concepts of field habitus and individual habitus (Sela-Sheffy, 2014), or translational habitus and

translational habitus (Yannakopoulou, 2008). Field or professional habitus can be associated with norms in the sense that it is shared by members of a field and determines the perceptions and actions of the agents of the chosen field, while individual or translational habitus determines the agent's deviation from the field habitus. I therefore analysed Reed's translation of culture-bound terms in *UVB* and *LVNM* as resulting from the habitus acquired in the literary field, as well as the individual habitus. For the sake of clarity, I use the term 'field' to refer to the habitus acquired from the translator's experience in the field, and which is likely to be shared with other agents of the same field, and 'habitus' to refer to his individual habitus, which he acquired from his social background prior to entering the literary field in which he worked (Wolf, 2013). The analysis was done by putting the source texts terms and their translations side-by-side, followed by a description of the translator's actions and the social factors that influenced the actions.

### **5.3 Textual analysis of the translations of *Une Vie de Boy* and *Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille***

This section focuses on the analysis of Reed's translation of culture-specific terms in *UVB* and *LVNM*. The section begins by giving synoptic overviews of the two novels under study, followed by a description of what constitute culture-bound terms in the novels. This will then be followed by an analysis of the strategies that Reed used in translating the culture-bound terms, with an explanation of how the strategies adopted, were influenced by his habitus.

#### **5.3.1 Synoptic overviews of Ferdinand Oyono's novels**

This section presents a brief overview of the author's biography and the two novels that constitute the subject of the study.

##### **5.3.1.1 The author**

Ferdinand Oyono was born in 1929, in the village of Ngoulemakong in the south of Cameroon. His father worked for the colonial administration. At a tender age, his mother, who was a devout Christian, left his father because of his polygamous lifestyle. Oyono was thus raised by his mother and he attended missionary schools and served as an altar boy, while also singing in the church choir. After completing the first part of his education in Ebolowa, he worked for the missionaries as a Boy (or servant), before the colonial administration sent him to France, where he obtained his

Baccalaureate in 1950. He then worked as a television actor before continuing his studies in Law at the Sorbonne and Diplomacy at the Ecole Nationale d'Administration, Paris, France. When Cameroon gained Independence from France in 1960, he joined the administration in a long diplomatic and political career where he worked as an ambassador, UNICEF director, and minister in the Cameroonian government. In 2010 (at age 80), he collapsed and died during the official visit of the United Nations Secretary General to Cameroon.

Oyono's upbringing greatly influenced his writings; his works focus on the realities of African societies during colonisation, with the exposure of the hypocritical subjugation and exploitation of the African masses by the political and religious authorities of the French colonial system. His most famous works, *Une Vie de Boy* and *Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille* were published in 1956, while *Chemin d'Europe* was published in 1960. A final novel, *Pandemonium*, is said to have been withdrawn from the publisher, and it is alleged that it was because the novel was an even more biting attack on the French colonial system. Oyono did not want to antagonise the French as he had become part of the Cameroonian political system which was then still very attached to France (Everson, 1998:383).

### **5.3.1.2 Une Vie de Boy and Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille**

Ferdinand Oyono's first novel, *Une Vie de Boy*, was published by Julliard in Paris in 1956. The publication of *Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille* followed shortly after. Both novels denounce the ills of French colonialism in Africa, in general, particularly in Oyono's native Cameroon.

*UVB* presents the colonial situation in which colonial rule was first presented as something beneficial to Africans, while it was intended to subjugate, humiliate and exploit them. The novel narrates the story of Joseph Toundi, a young African who works for a white colonial administrator. Toundi initially regards his association with the white administrator as a lucky opportunity for him, which puts him above his African peers. However, he subsequently learns the dark side of colonialism through unfortunate events that see him finally running away from Cameroon to die in neighbouring Spanish Guinea. His statement "What are we black men who are called French" (Oyono, 1956a) highlights the deceptive ideals of French colonialism as something meant to bring civilisation and development to Africans, thereby elevating

them to the same level as the French. The story is told by Toundi himself in a diary he keeps, a culture he learns from his white master. The novel is written in a simple and satiric style, very much embedded in the cultural orality of the author. The fact that the preamble to the story states that the story was written in *Ewondo* (a language of central Cameroon) highlights the author's intention for the style to carry much of his native oral structure.

*LVNM* tells the story of Meka, an old man who embraces the French colonial system with open arms. He donates his land to the Roman Catholic mission for the construction of the local church, abandons his traditional beliefs by converting to Christianity and his two only sons die while fighting for France in World War II. When the colonial administrator informs him that he is going to be honoured with a medal of friendship for all the sacrifices that he has made to France, Meka naively believes in the illusion that he will become friends to the French. On the day of the medal award, he is made to stand under the scorching sun in his uncomfortable leather shoes for hours waiting for the arrival of the French commander, while all the white guests at the event are sitting in the shade. At the reception offered by the French to mark the event, Meka drinks and gets drunk; amidst a storm that rages that night, he loses his way and wanders into the white neighbourhood, where he is arrested and thrown in prison. All of this takes Meka on a journey of reawakening in which he realises that everything the French do is to dominate and exploit the Africans. When he is released, he is determined to go back to the traditional way he used to live before the arrival of the French colonial system.

The two novels of Oyono were written around the same time (1950s) and both tell the same story of French domination and exploitation. Some characters also appear in both novels, making them appear to be two parts of the same story. Both novels have been translated into different languages; *UVB* has been published in fourteen languages (Waliaula, 2013:1). The English translations of the two novels were done by Reed and published in 1966 by Heinemann in the *AWS*, respectively as *Houseboy* and *The Old Man and the Medal*.

### **5.3.2 The translation of culture-bound terms in *UVB* and *LVNM***

This section focuses on the culture-bound terms in *UVB* and *LVNM* and their English translations as *HB* and *TOMM*. The examples for each category are put alongside

their English translations, and the translator's actions are described using the Bourdieusian concepts of field and habitus.

### 5.3.2.1 Proverbs

According to Bandia (2008:72), proverbs convey universal truth and provide a rich source of imagery and pithy expression that can be quite apt in expressing ideas that would otherwise require more elaborate forms of discourse. Their use is contextualised within a specific culture and reflects the world view and cultural heritage of a community. This implies that proverbs are culture-bound, and knowledge of the cultural and situational context of their use is necessary to fully understand them. Proverbs constitute an integral part of the discursive patterns of African communities, and this has influenced the works of African writers who use proverbs in their works as a means of preserving the cultural world view of their local communities.

For African writers in European languages, the use of proverbs is often done through a literary translation of the proverbs from their native languages into the European languages in which they write (Bandia, 2008). Even when some of the proverbs have direct equivalents in the European languages, these writers prefer to translate literally in order to valorise their cultural heritage. The translation of proverbs has been a central theme in translation studies and attention has focused on the challenges inherent in their translation as result of their culture-specific nature (Shehab & Daragmeh, 2014). Such a challenge would thus be more apparent in African literature, as the interpretation of the proverbs would not only require the understanding of the source-text language, but also an understanding of the cultural context from which the proverbs are drawn. Below are instances of Oyono's use of proverbs and their translations by John Reed. The source text (ST) proverbs are followed by literal translations (LT), before the target text renditions (TT), so as to provide a clear understanding of the translator's strategies in the transfer process:

i) **ST: 'La bouche qui a tété n'oublie pas la saveur du lait'** (LVNM, 17).

**LT:** *The mouth that has sucked does not forget the taste of milk.*

**TT: 'The mouth that has sucked never forgets the taste of milk'** (TOMM, 10).

Here Meka is expressing the difficulty of turning away from the old habit of drinking the indigenous gin, *arki*. It is a common drink in his community, especially for its medicinal effects, but with the coming of the European administration and religion, the drink has been outlawed. This does not, however, stop the community from brewing and drinking it clandestinely as is the case with Meka. Reed used a foreignising approach translating the proverb (i), which, in my view, enabled him to maintain the author's cultural world view reflected in the original. In as much as it may be argued that the expression 'never forgets', is stronger than the original 'n'oublie pas', which directly translates into 'does not forget', it does not affect the general meaning expressed by the proverb. It could therefore be argued that Reed's translation fits into the nature of the African literary field into which he was translating, which was characterised by productions that valorised the cultural world views of the authors.

ii) **ST: 'La marmite dans laquelle on a préparé le bouc garde longtemps son arôme'** (*LVNM*, 103).

**LT:** *The pot in which the goat is cooked keeps its smell for a long time.*

**TT: 'It is a long time before the pot where the goat is cooked loses the smell'** (*TOMM*, 93).

Meka uses this proverb (ii) to express his self-importance in reminiscing that he comes from the lineage of great men, and that greatness is still flowing in his blood. In the translation, Reed again maintained the source text author's world view. He, however, altered the sequence of the proverb to read differently from the original, without affecting the message or the source text's cultural world view. The alteration has to do with the translator's use of modulation in changing the point of view from 'keeping its smell' to 'not losing the smell', and it could be said that he was aiming for the translation to read more fluently to his target readers. Reed's action in this case highlights the non-neutrality of the translator during the translation process (Munday, 2012:2). I would therefore argue that despite the alteration, the translation preserves the local colour of the source text, thereby ensuring that the text is aligned with the style that is characteristic of productions in the target literary field.

iii) **ST: 'Le chimpanzé n'est pas le frère du gorille'** (*LVNM*, 168).

**LT:** *The chimpanzee is not a brother to the gorilla.*

**TT: 'The chimpanzee is no brother to the gorilla'** (*TOMM*, 151).

This proverb (iii) is used to explain the fact that although white people may pretend to embrace black people, they would never really accept them as equals. The proverb thus justifies why Meka has been so badly treated by the white administrators directly after being given a medal, which supposedly makes him a friend of the white man. In his translation, Reed also used a foreignised approach by producing a literal rendition of the original proverb, and it could be said that this had a reparatory impact (Bandia, 2008) in that the cultural world view of the source text is preserved in the translation. It could therefore be said that his action in this case was aligned with the nature of the African literature in European languages that was being produced in his field of operation.

iv) **ST** : *'Nous mangions en silence car la bouche qui parle ne mange pas'* (UVB, 19).

**LT**: *We ate in silence, for the mouth that eats does not talk.*

**TT**: **'We eat in silence, for while the mouth speaks it does not serve for eating.'** (HB, 1).

This proverb (iv) is used to express the fact that talking while eating is not a good habit. Though the proverb is also used in the Cameroonian culture to imply that 'if you bribe someone, s/he would not report your crime', I would stick to the one referring to the eating habit because that is the context within which it has been used in the novel. The narrator uses the proverb in the novel to describe the reason for their silence while eating.

In the translation, Reed maintained the message and local cultural colour of the source text. However, he altered the way the message is expressed by making it more explicit, thereby making it sound more like a statement than a proverb. This could cause the reader of the translation to overlook the proverbial expression because it reads more like a normal sentence than a proverb. It could equally be argued that Reed's intention was to make the meaning clearer to the target reader, since a literal translation does not so much express the simultaneity of the action that the proverb refers to and instead sounds as if the mouth that does one action is incapable of doing the other. Reed thus altered the source text to suit the linguistic structure of the target system (Hermans, 2007), to meet the expectations of the target readers. Reed's target audience was the target market of the AWS, which was made up of Anglophone Africans on the continent, as well as the international literary

audience (Currey, 2008). This might suggest that Reed's target readers had different expectations, because the interest of African readers could not have been attracted by the same things that would attract an international reader to African literature.

I would, however, argue that the readership expectations of Reed's translations were the same as those that had been shown for the works of African authors writing in European languages. This is because, while the Anglophone African readership could easily identify with the literary productions in Africa, the international audience had also come to recognise the peculiar nature of African works that had become part of the global literary poly-system. It could therefore be said that by aligning his translation with the style of the African literary field, Reed was satisfying the expectations of both the African and international audiences.

v) **ST: 'Les fantômes ne murmurent pas sans qu'il pleuve la nuit'** (*LVNM*, 39).

**LT:** *Ghosts do not mutter without it raining at night.*

**TT: 'If the ghosts mutter it will rain in the night'** (*TOMM*, 31).

This proverb (v) is used to express a cause-and-effect situation. In this case, it is used to explain that everything happens for a reason. Nkolo has come into Engamba's home almost out of breath and started asking questions. This makes the listeners impatient and worried about what he is about to tell them. Engamba then uses the proverb to tell his people to calm down and listen to Nkolo, for there must be a reason as to why he has come to them. The proverb portrays the belief system of Oyono's Bulu community, where notions of ghosts and ancestors are part of their customs. Reed's translation preserves the cause-and-effect message of the proverb, as well as the cultural world view of the source text. It was, however, observed that the translator altered the negative form of the original to an affirmative form in the translation. This could be viewed as the translator's intention to clarify the ambiguity contained in the literal translation, in which it is not clear whether it is the ghosts' action that brings about rain or *vice versa*. It could therefore be argued that Reed's translation eliminates the ambiguity, thereby making the meaning clearer to the target readers.

vi) **ST: 'Je serai le boy du chef des Blancs : le chien du roi est le roi des chiens'** (*UVB*, 34).

**LT:** *I shall be the boy of the chief of the Whites: **The dog of the king is the king of dogs.***

**TT:** **'I shall be the Chief European's boy. The dog of a King is the King of dogs'** (HB, 20).

Toundi uses this proverb (vi) to express his joy at becoming the commandant's houseboy, as it would elevate him above the other Africans in his community, since the King's dog is the most important dog in the kingdom. This seems to suggest the inferiority complex that characterised the way in which Africans perceived themselves in relation to Europeans. However, Toundi is not as naïve one might think, and his expression in this case is likely intended to ridicule the ignorance of the Europeans who believe that the social standing of an African who associates with them is automatically elevated. Reed adopted a foreignising approach in translating the proverb, and this could be viewed as his intention to ensure that both the world view of the source text and the author's satire are preserved in the translation. One could therefore contend that the translation in this case is aligned with the poetics of the African literary field, where language was used in a peculiar way by authors to express the asymmetrical social relationship between the European colonialist and indigenous Africans.

vii) **ST: L'œil va plus loin et plus vite que la bouche, rien ne l'arrête dans son voyage** (UVB, 70).

**LT:** *The eye goes farther and faster than the mouth, nothing stops it on its journey.*

**TT: The eye goes farther and faster than the mouth, nothing stops it** (HB, 60).

This proverb (vii) is used as a piece of advice to express the fact that it is not always good to tell the world the secret things that you know about other people. In this case the guard tells Toundi that he saw their boss' wife bringing her lover home the previous night when her husband was away. He uses the proverb to show that he knows he is not supposed to say what he saw, but he is obliged to confide in Toundi. This indicates the way domestic employees working for white colonialists used to undermine the rules of confidentiality by exposing the secrets of their employers as to ridicule them.

It can be observed that Reed adopted a foreignised approach in the translation, thereby ensuring that the cultural world view of the source text is preserved in the translation. Reed, however, omitted a segment of the second part of the proverb by leaving out the journey part in the literal translation and just said ‘nothing stops it’. The use of omission as a translation strategy is to eliminate source text information that is considered irrelevant to the translated message (Chesterman, 2016). This would imply that Reed believed that the words ‘on its journey’ are irrelevant to the translated message. It could be argued that although this intervention might deprive the target readers of the journey metaphor contained in the original, it still preserves the cultural world view expressed in the source text.

viii) **ST: La femme est un épi de maïs à la portée de toute bouche pourvu qu’elle ne soit pas édentée (UVB, 77).**

*LT: The woman is a cob of maize at the reach of every mouth, unless it is toothless.*

**TT: A woman is a cob of maize for any mouth that has its teeth (HB, 71).**

The proverb (viii) here is used to express the belief that women are weak and can easily give in to the sexual advances of any man who is bold enough to approach them. In this case, the proverb is used to refer to the extra-marital affair of the commandant’s wife, who has been held in very high esteem by the natives since her arrival from Europe, until they discover that it takes just a short while for her to start having an affair. The proverb thus suggests that to win a woman’s heart is not as difficult as some might think. It can be observed that Reed used a foreignising approach in his translation to preserve the cultural world view expressed in the original. He, however, used modulation to alter the point of view expressed in the ‘toothless mouth’ to that of the ‘mouth that has its teeth’. It could be argued that Reed’s intention in this case was to pass across to the target reader the notion of the ‘mouth’s ability to act’, which he thought would be better expressed by saying ‘a mouth that has its teeth’ instead of the literal rendition ‘a mouth deprived of teeth’.

ix) **ST: Hors de son trou, la souris ne défie pas le chat (UVB, 92).**

*LT: Out of its hole, the mouse does not defy the cat.*

**TT: ‘Outside his hole the mouse does not defy the cat’ (HB, 87).**

The proverb (ix) is used as a piece of advice for people to avoid getting into conflict with those who are in more powerful positions than themselves. In this case, the cook is advising Toundi to avoid doing anything that would annoy his boss' wife for that would land him in trouble. The proverb is drawn from the African world of fables and portrays the author's world view in relation to power relations in the society. Reed also uses a foreignising approach in translating this proverb, and it could be said that it enables him to preserve the source text message and cultural world view in the translation, thereby aligning his translation with the poetics of the African literary field in which fables were prevalent.

In conclusion, it can be observed that in translating the proverbs used by Oyono, Reed's actions were influenced by factors of the African literary field in which he was working, such as the literary poetics and the expected reception of the target readership. This led him to predominantly adopt a foreignising approach as a means to recreate the author's cultural world view and align with the literary expectations of the target readership.

### 5.3.2.2 Idiomatic expressions

Idiomatic expressions are one of the most widely recognised categories of culture-bound terms. The challenge of translating idiomatic expressions stem from the fact that they are fixed expressions whose meaning cannot be deciphered from the individual lexical items that constitute them (Baker, 2011:63). In the case of African literature in European languages, African writers use idiomatic expressions through the process of linguistic calque (Suh, 2005) in which they translate them literally from their native languages into the European language of translation. This ensures that their cultural world views are preserved in their writings. Such is the case with Oyono who makes use of a wide variety of idiomatic expressions from his native Bulu culture in his novels. Below are instances of Oyono's use of idiomatic expressions in *UVB* and *LVNM*, and their translations by John Reed. The source text (ST) expressions are followed by literal translations (LT) before the target text renditions (TT), to give a clear understanding of the translator's strategies in the transfer process:

i) **ST: Bosse de vache! Sa tête me revient!** (*LVNM*, 14).

**LT:** *Hump of a cow! His head is coming back to me.*

**TT: By the cow's hump! Now I remember that face** (*TOMM*, 7).

The first part of the idiom (i) is an exclamation of surprise; the speaker is surprised that he could not recognise Meka. In his translation, Reed rendered the exclamatory part literally, while transforming the second part to make the message clearer. He used 'face' instead of 'head' and 'remember' instead of 'coming back'. This makes it easier for the reader to understand than would have been the case if the translation was done literally. It could therefore be argued that his choices in this case were influenced by the expected reception of the target readership of the African literary field in which he was working. Reed confirmed in the interview that his translation choices were guided by his intention to give the target readers the same experience as the source text readers. It could also be argued that his previous work with the AWS had given him a good idea of the target readership for which he was translating, as well as the literary expectations of the said readership, and these were influential in the textual decisions he made.

ii) **ST : Père, tu es là-dedans?** (*LVNM*, 18).

**LT:** Father, are you in there?

**TT: Father, are you alright?** (*TOMM*,12).

The speaker uses this idiomatic expression (ii) to address Meka whom he sees behaving abnormally, so he seeks to know if something has taken control of Meka's mind to make him behave the way he is doing. It is thus an expression to ask if someone is feeling okay. In the translation, Reed neutralised the idiom and opted for clarity in the message. He therefore prioritised the meaning over the form of the idiom, thereby sacrificing the cultural world view of the source text. This implies that his translation was not aligned with the form of orality inherent in the aesthetics of the African literary field (Bandia, 2008; Gyasi, 1998). Given that the literary expectations of readers are shaped by the works they have been exposed to (Bourdieu, 1984), Reed's action in this case could not have been to satisfy the African readership, because the taste of this readership was in harmony with the literal productions of the African literary field.

This raises the question of what might have influenced this case of inconsistency in Reed's decision-making. It could be said that his habitus as a non-African led him to make a decision that was more aligned with his social background than with the poetics of the African literary field in which he was working. This underscores the fact

that while a translator may set out to follow a particular approach, his individual habitus may influence him/her to make decisions that are contrary to the said approach (Tyulenev, 2014). One could therefore argue that the time spent working on African literature cannot compensate for a non-African's ability to fully capture the cultural world view of African literature in translation. It is in line with this that Bandia (2008) contends that the translator most suited for such a task needs to be an African who is closely familiar with the logos of African literature.

iii) **ST: J'ai compté les nattes du toit ... répondit-elle (LVNM, 20).**

**LT: I counted the matting of the roof ... she replied.**

**TT: I counted the matting in the roof, she said (TOMM, 13).**

The expression (iii) means that the speaker had a sleepless night. Kelara uses it to express the fact that she did not sleep at all since her husband was summoned by the commandant and they were kept awake by wondering what the purpose of the summons was. Reed used a foreignising approach in the translation to preserve the cultural world view of the source text, which was in line with the norms of the African literary field in which he was working.

iv) **ST: C'était maintenant au cœur de remplacer la bouche fatiguée (LVNM, 2).**

**LT: It was now time for the heart to replace the tired mouth.**

**TT: The mouth had tired itself with talking and now the heart must take its place (TOMM, 13).**

The idiom (iv) above expresses the idea that when people have talked about a subject for too long, it is good to drop it, even though they would still be thinking of it. It is used to describe the situation between Meka and his wife who have spent the night talking about the commandant's summons and decided to avoid talking about it again in the morning, though it was still troubling them. In the translation, Reed altered the expression by making it more explicit, and it could be said that his intention was to make it clearer to the target reader. One could therefore argue that his intervention in this case was intended to preserve the idiomatic nature and cultural world view of the source text, while ensuring that the translation was clear to the target readers.

- v) **ST:** *Tout ce qui le touche me touche aussi, nous avons le même sang et je peux parler pour sa bouche* (LVNM, 39/40).

**LT:** Anything that affects him affects me too, we have the same blood and ***I can speak for his mouth.***

**TT:** *Anything that concerns him concerns me as well, we have the same blood and I can speak for his mouth* (TOMM, 32).

This idiomatic expression (v) refers to a situation in which one person speaks on behalf of another. In this case, Mbogsi is defending his action after being accused by the others of being pompous and not letting Engamba, who has received a surprise guest, speak for himself. He argues that he and Engamba have a lot in common, which allows him to be able to speak on behalf of the former. The expression portrays the cohesion and solidarity that underpin the relationship between the members of the community. Reed translated the idiom literally, thereby faithfully representing the cultural world view of the author, and this aligned the target text to the aesthetic norms of the African literary field in which he was working.

- vi) **ST:** *Il avait encore cinq femmes et allait briser les pattes de l'antilope pour la sixième fois* (LVNM, 45).

**LT:** *He already had five wives and was going to break the legs of an antelope for the sixth time.*

**TT:** *He already had five wives and was going to break the legs of the antelope for the sixth time* (TOMM, 37).

This expression (vi) refers to getting married for the sixth time. The idiom is drawn from the fauna and the hunting tradition of the author's Bulu community. Given the very culture-bound nature of the expression, the author uses footnotes to explain that the idiom is the equivalent of a honeymoon in the Western tradition. Engamba uses the idiom to express his envy of Nkolo who is about to get married to his sixth wife. This also portrays the marriage customs of Oyono's Bulu culture, which was predominantly polygamous. Reed translated the expression literally, which enabled him to preserve the tradition and belief system of the author's society, as well as maintaining the cultural world view of the source text. He also translated the footnotes to provide the target text reader the same understanding of the expression as was given to the source text reader. Reed's action in this case could therefore be said to have been influenced by the nature of literary works, as his translation was

intended to preserve the author's world view, while making sure that the translated text was clear to the target readers.

vii) **ST: Nous allons vivre en attendant ton retour** (*LVNM*, 52).

**LT:** *We shall live while waiting for your return.*

**TT: We shall only be living for you to come back** (*TOMM*, 44).

This idiomatic expression (vii) refers to waiting impatiently for someone to come back. Engamba and his wife are leaving for Doum to be part of Meka's medal award ceremony, and the villagers are confused as to how this new development will affect their lives. They are thus anxious for Engamba to come back from the ceremony with information that would clarify the situation. It is this anxiety that is expressed by Mbogsi through the use of the above-mentioned idiom. While the translation is not a literal rendition of the source text, it still evokes the local colour and sense of anxiety expressed in the source text. I would therefore argue that Reed's intervention in altering the text was intended to make it easier for the target reader to understand, while ensuring that the cultural world view of the author is not lost.

viii) **ST: Ça c'est son habitude quand il veut manger la bouche** (*UVB*, 55).

**LT:** *That is his habit when he wants to eat the mouth.*

**TT:** *He always does that when he wanted to be mouthing me* (*HB*, 43).

This idiom (viii) is used to express the act of kissing. Sophie uses it to express her disappointment that her white lover is only nice to her when he desires to kiss her or sleep with her. The expression is thus a reflection of the society's perception of the notion of kissing in which lovers 'eat each other's mouths'. In the translation, Reed has altered the text in a way that the image of 'eating the mouth' has been eliminated. This makes the translation give a vague rendition of the source text message, as 'mouthing me' would not directly be understood to mean kissing but can instead be understood as having a verbal fight with someone. Reed's intervention in this case may thus lead the target text reader to interpret the message differently from what was understood by the source text reader. Given that his translation was based on his interpretation of the source text, it could be argued that his lack of sufficient exposure to and knowledge of the author's culture influenced his misinterpretation of the message. This is because the message that is transferred to the target audience is based on the translator's interpretation of the source text

message (Venuti, 2013). This implies that Reed's identity as a non-African affected his ability to fully understand and transmit the communicative intention of the source text (Bandia, 2008). In Bourdieusian terms, one could say that the time spent in the African literary field was not enough for him to acquire the habitus necessary to fully understand the local world view expressed in African literature.

ix) **ST:** *Il m'appelle « mon chou », « mon chevreau », « ma poule »* (UVB, 55).

**LT:** *He calls me my cabbage, my kid (young goat) and my chicken.*

**TT:** *He calls me 'my cabbage', 'my chicken' (HB, 43).*

These (ix) are not African idioms, but French idiomatic expressions which are used to express affection to a lover. Sophie is telling Toundi of the romantic words her white lover calls her when he is about to make love to her. The author's use of these French idioms produces humour, as result of the backlash provoked by introducing foreign concepts to African societies. Sophie initially thinks that the words are rude, for in her culture it is rude to address people by food or animal names. This backlash is echoed in another scene in the novel (Oyono, 1956a:68) when Bikokolo is narrating his first love encounter with a white woman. The woman called her '*mon petit poulet*' (my little chick) and he takes offence, until the woman explains that it is an expression of affection in her culture. Reed's translation is a literal rendition of the source text words. This maintains the cultural divide and humour generated in the source text. The humour is even stronger in the translation because the words are not associated with the expression of affection. Reed also omitted the second idiom in the sequence '*mon chevreau*' (my kid). The social causality of this action on the part of the translator cannot be ascertained, given that there could have been no negative effect in maintaining the words in the translation. It is thus my view that such an action could have been the result of other factors, such as intuition (Robinson, 2015) or biological factors like fatigue (Marais, 2014).

The question of why the editing process did not spot the inconsistency can, however, be explained by social factors. It has already been argued that Reed had accumulated significant symbolic capital from his work in the field and this was an enabling factor in ensuring that his actions were accepted unchallenged by other agents of the translation process. This raises the question as to whether some of the translations would still have been accepted had they been rendered by a translator

occupying a position in the field inferior to that of Reed? This underscores the role of the power relations between agents of the literary field on the actions of translators at textual level (Bourdieu, 2002).

In conclusion, in translating the idiomatic expressions in *UVB* and *LVNM*, Reed adopted a foreignising approach that enabled him to faithfully represent Oyono's cultural world view in the target texts. Most of his actions were therefore influenced by factors of the African literary field in which he was working. The analysis, however, revealed that, in addition to social factors, other factors also influenced the decisions of Reed, thereby implying that the causality of translation action is rather complex in nature (Marais, 2014).

### 5.3.2.3 Ideophones and expressive lengthenings

Ideophones are interjectory words that convey an idea-in-sound (Suh, 2005). These are lexical items that express emotions during a conversation through a combination of sound and meaning (Noss, 2003:41). Many African languages make use of these ideophones to express different types of emotional reactions, including, but not limited to, surprise, fear, disgust, disappointment, admiration, and appreciation (Finnegan, 2012). This has influenced the works of African writers who use ideophones to give their characters authentic African identities (Mphande, 2002). Given that African ideophones are culture-bound (Storch, 2013), African authors writing in European languages use the Roman alphabet to represent these ideophones in a way that a reader who is foreign to the author's culture would be able to produce the same sounds of the ideophones. Ferdinand Oyono makes use of ideophones drawn from his Bulu language in *UVB* and *LVNM* for emotional and emphatic purposes. Examples of the use of ideophones in *UVB* and *LVNM* and their translations are analysed below (The same abbreviations apply as above):

i) **ST:** *Il s'asseoir sur un lit ! cria un énergumène.*

**Môooooot !** répondit l'assistance en imitant le bruit sourd des fesses sur un lit de bambou (*LVNM*, 17).

**TT:** *'He sits on a bed,' came a maniacal shout.*

**'Mooooooooot,'** cried everyone else imitating the dull sound of buttocks coming down on a bamboo bed (*TOMM*, 11).

The bolded word in this ideophone (i) echoes the sound produced when someone sits down. The author uses the ideophone to create humour, as well as to portray the conviviality of traditional African life. In his translation, Reed faithfully transferred the same ideophone into the target language, thereby maintaining the same message and producing the same effect of humour as in the source text. Thus, in my view Reed's intention here was influenced by the poetic nature of the African literary field.

ii) **ST:** *Pas tout à fait sampaagne, dit-il, mais même chose, **chfchfchfchfchfch** ... (LVNM, 56).*

**TT:** 'Not sampaagne,' he said, 'but same thing.' He then went '**fchfchfchfchfch**' (TOMM, 47).

This ideophone (ii) echoes the sound produced by opening a bottle of champagne. The speaker uses it to tell his boss that the drink is similar to champagne in that it produces the same sound when opened. Reed maintained the same lexical ideophone in his translation in an attempt to preserve the same local colour and produce the same sound effect. However, the translation ignores the fact that between French and English, different letter combinations tend to produce different sounds. The letter combination 'ch' in French produces the [ʃ] sound, while in English it produces the [tʃ] sound. Given that the [ʃ] sound in English is produced by the 'sh' letter combination, one would have expected the translator to have something like '*fshfshfshfshfsh*'. I would contend that this discrepancy does not change the sound effect produced in the target text as it is easy for the target readers to associate the ideophone to the sound to the same concept of opening a champagne bottle. This is because the African literary field was characterised by writings in which authors writing in European languages regularly introduced words from their different indigenous languages into their writings (Gyasi, 1998). This implies that the readership of African literature had become familiar with this style of writing.

iii) **ST:** ***Aaaaaaaaaakiéééééé!** ... *s'exclama-t-il. Tu oses dire que tu n'as rien fait?* (UVB, 25).*

**TT:** '**Aaaaaaaaaakiaaaaay!** he roared. 'You dare say you haven't done anything?' (HB, 10).

The ideophone (iii) is used to express shock or bewilderment. In this case, Toundi's authoritarian father uses it to express his shock at hearing his son talk back when he



English word to preserve the author's world view, while at the same time producing the same effect in the target readers as that of the original.

- v) **ST:** *O tous les Mvemmas! tonna Nti.*  
**Yéééé é é é é é ...!** *Répondit l'assistance (LVNM, 169).*  
**TT:** *'O Mvemmas!' thundered Nti.*  
**'Yeeeeee-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e!'** *replied the people (TOMM, 152).*

The expression in bold above is a lengthened version of the word 'yé', which is drawn from the author's native language and means 'yes'. Just like the previous word, it indicates an emotional and emphatic response and portrays the aspects of public speaking in Oyono's Bulu culture. Reed translated the expression by recreating the lengthening, thereby preserving the world view of the source text and producing the same effect on the target text reader like that of the original. Reed's lengthening is, however, longer than that of the original, which raises questions on the reasons for his decision. Could his decision have been influenced by the norms of the field or his individual habitus? I would argue that Reed's decision in this case could not have been influenced by the norms of the translating field because the effect on the target readers would have been the same as that of the original if he had maintained the same length of the original expression in the translation.

The validity of this argument is evidenced in his translations of most of the ideophones that have been analysed above, in which he maintained the same length of the original stretched sounds in his translations. His choice could therefore not have been influenced by an intention to align with the norms of the field. His decision could also not be said to be influenced by his habitus as it is difficult to see what he would want to achieve by this change in the length of the original expression. One could therefore argue that his action in this case is an indication of inconsistency on the part of the translator, which suggests that in addition to social constraints, other factors need to be incorporated in analysing a translation activity, because translational reality is rather complex to be explained from one perspective (Tyulenev, 2012).

- vi) **ST:** *... Mais qui de vous a rencontré la main d'un Blanc dans un même plat de nourriture ?*

*Personne, personne, persooooooooooooooooonne ! Vociféra l'assistance (LVNM, 123).*

**TT:** *'But has anyone here ever come across a white hand in the same dish of food?'*

*'No one, no one, Nooooo one!' the company shouted. (TOMM, 110).*

In this expression (vi), the second vowel in the word '*personne*', has been lengthened to produce a strong emotional response to the question of the speaker. Apart from portraying the nature of public speaking in the author's culture, the expression also reflects the intensity of the bitterness that the colonised Africans feel towards the white colonialists. In the translation, Reed recreated the lengthening in the vowel of the English word '*no*'. Given that the French word '*personne*' means 'no one' in English, Reed left the word 'one' in its real form and limited the lengthening to the first one, and one could argue that his intention was to make the translation more fluent to the target readers, while preserving the content and effect of the source text expression.

vii) **ST:** *Le Blanc a-t-il un frère dans cette assistance ?*

**Nooooooooon !** *Repartit toute l'assistance avec encore plus de force (LVNM, 167).*

**TT:** *'Has the white man a brother in this company?'*

**'Nooooooooooooo!'** *the whole company rejoined more loudly than ever (TOMM, 150).*

In this expression (vii), the vowel sound of the French word '*non*' has been lengthened to produce a strong negative response to the speaker's question. Just like in the previous example, this expression portrays the aspects of public speaking in the author's native culture, as well as the bitterness that the people feel against the white colonial authority. The response indicates a rejection of the French policy of assimilation, which was supposed to create fraternity between the French and the people from their colonies. Reed translated the expression by using an English equivalent in which the vowel sound of the word 'no' is lengthened, and it could be said that this enabled him to preserve the content and effect of the original expression.

viii) **ST:** – *Aaaaaaaaaagathaaaaaa ! ... C'est ainsi que Binama comme un muezzin, appela sa femme depuis la case à palabres (LVNM, 68).*

- **Ououououououoiiii!** ... *répondit-elle* (LVNM, 68).

**TT :** '**Aaaaaaaaaagathaaaaa!** ...' *This was how Binama, like a muezzin, called his wife from the indaba hut* (TOMM, 58).

**'Yeeess!** ...' *She replied* (TOMM, 58).

This example (viii) portrays the nature of communication in the Oyono's Bulu culture. In this case, Binama is calling out to his wife from a distant, and the wife responds in the same manner. As such, the vowels in the name 'Agatha' have been lengthened, as well as those in the French response word 'oui', which means 'yes' in English. The lengthening of the words indicates the pitch of the speakers as they try to make their distant listener hear them. In the translation, Reed maintained the lengthening in the name 'Agatha' as it is in the original, given that the name also exists in the English culture. He also recreated the lengthening of the word 'oui' by lengthening the English equivalent 'yes'. His translation therefore preserves the content and effect of the source text in the target texts.

ix) **ST:** *De Gaulle, j'arrive, cria-t-elle, J'aaaariiiiiive* ... (LVNM, 72).

**TT:** '*De Gaulle, I'm coming,*' she shrieked, '**I'm cooooooming**' (TOMM, 62).

This example (ix) is similar to the previous one in that it reflects a situation in which someone is pitching his or her voice in order to talk to another person in a distant location. In this case Agatha is talking to her son from a distance. The vowels in the French word 'j'arrive' have thus been lengthened to pitch the voice so as to carry her message to her son. Reed recreated the lengthened expression by lengthening the first vowel of the English word 'come'. This has ensured that the author's cultural world view and the source text effect are preserved in the translation. I therefore contend that Reed's action in this case was influenced by the target readers' expected reception of the translation.

In conclusion, in translating the ideophones and expressive lengthenings of Oyono's source texts, Reed recreated them in a way that preserved the cultural world view of the author, as well as the effect of the source texts. This implies that Reed was most influenced by the target readers' expected reception of the translation. Given that the target readership is a factor of the field of literary production (Bourdieu, 2002), I would argue that his actions in this regard were influenced by the

literary field in which he worked. There was, however, a case of inconsistency in his translation decision, which underscores the complex nature of translation phenomena. This implies that a complexity approach is required for a comprehensive understanding of translation action.

#### 5.3.2.4 Forms of address

One aspect of Oyono's use of culture-bound forms is in his use of terms of address. In many societies, the words used to address people are embedded in the cultural norms of the societies in question because they reflect the custom of human relationships in the specific cultures (Kruger, 2012:193). Oyono thus uses words that are specific to his Bulu culture, as well as those brought into the culture by the colonial system. Examples of culture-bound forms of address used by Oyono are analysed below. The source text (ST) words again are followed by literal translations (LT) before the target text renditions (TT), to give a clear understanding of the translator's strategies in the transfer process:

i) **ST:** *Je n'aime pas les histoires, petit* (LVNM, 13).

**LT:** *I don't like trouble, little one.*

**TT:** 'I don't like these scenes, dearie' (TOMM, 6).

The term above (i) comes from 'petit frère', which means 'little brother' and it is used to address a younger person in an affectionate manner. Mami Titi uses it to soften up the young man who is reluctant to give up his seat to an older man. In his translation, Reed opted for an equivalent endearing word in English, and it could be argued that this is because the original word is more of French than Bulu, and the translator did not see the need to export this cultural world view as he did in other cases involving the author's Bulu culture. He therefore chose an English equivalent that would enable him to produce a text that would be easy for the target readers to understand, while at the same time preserving the cajoling function of the original word.

ii) **ST:** *Dans la tribu des Yemvams, il est mon beau-frère par mon beau-frère* (LVNM, 27).

**LT:** *In the tribe of the Yemvams, he is my brother-in-law by my brother-in-law.*

**TT:** In the Yemvams tribe, **he is my brother-in-law by my brother-in-law** (TOMM, 20).

The expression in this case (ii) is used to address a person who comes from the same village or community as one's spouse. Meka uses it to refer to someone who comes from the same village as his brother-in-law. The expression indicates the nature of family relationship in Oyono' Bulu culture, where the concept of family is quite extended. The use of the expression may not be easy for a reader not exposed to the African context to understand, as it is shrouded in the oral tradition of the author's culture (Bandia, 2008; Batchelor, 2009; Gyasi, 2003). Reed translated the expression in a literal way so that the local colour and the way of life of the author's culture are preserved in the target text; this aligned his translation with the logos of literary productions of African authors writing in European languages.

iii) **ST: Passants ! venez partager notre modeste repas, cria-t-il (LVNM, 66).**

**LT: 'Passers-by! come and share our humble meal', he shouted.**

**TT: 'Travelers! Come and share our humble meal,' he called (TOMM, 56).**

The expression (iii) is used to address a passer-by. In this case, Binama is calling out to the people he sees passing by his house to come and share their food. This shows the spirit of solidarity prevalent in Oyono's culture. One does not need to know someone before inviting him or her over for a meal, for everyone is supposed to be nice to any other person in the community. In the translation, Reed chose 'travelers', instead of using the English word 'passers-by'. It could be said that the reason for this is that 'passers-by' would have made the word very 'English', thereby neutralising the author's local colour contained in the original. Also, 'travelers' is more appropriate in this case because the people in question are actually travelling on a long journey, and not just neighbours who are passing by the speaker's house. The second reason is further justified in Reed's translation of a variant of the same form of address later in the same novel: '*O homme qui passe!*' (LVNM, 177). Here, he translated it as '*O man that passes.*' I would therefore contend that his preference for 'travelers' in this case enabled him to make meaning clearer, while at the same time preserving the cultural world view of the source text in his translation.

iv) **ST: O homme ami ! que la tienne soit aussi bonne ! répondit le passant ... (LVNM, 177).**

**LT: O man friend! May yours also be good, replied the passer-by.**

**TT: 'O man who is a friend, may yours also be good,' said the man (TOMM, 157).**

This expression (iv) is used to address a man that someone meets on his way. It again portrays the social cohesion prevalent in the author's culture in the sense that the word 'friend' is used on someone that is not known to the speaker. Engamba uses it in this case to address the man he meets on his way. Reed used a foreignising strategy in the translation, and it could be argued that this enabled him to faithfully represent the author's cultural world view in the target text, and also ensured that his translation was aligned with the poetics of the African literary field in which he was working.

Another example of Oyono's use of culture-specific forms of address can be seen in the use of French titles as in the following cases: **M. Kobbingôlôm** (*LVNM*, 27); **M. Foucouni** (*LVNM*, 54); **M. Janopoulos** (*UVB*, 39); and **M. Moreau** (*UVB*, 70). The 'M.' attached to the names is the abbreviated form of the French title '*Monsieur*'. Reed maintained the French title in his translation as follows: **M. Kobbingôlom** (*TOMM*, 20); **M. Foucouni** (*TOMM*, 45); **M. Janopoulos** (*HB*, 27); and **M. Moreau** (*HB*, 60). Reed thus opted to preserve the French title instead of using its English equivalent 'Mister' and its abbreviation 'Mr.' This choice enabled the translation to preserve the class difference which is more expressed in the French '*Monsieur*' than in the English 'Mister'. This is further demonstrated in the case where Toundi is addressed as '***Monsieur Toundi***' (*UVB*, 85/97) by his boss' wife, which Reed also translates as '***Monsieur Toundi***' (*HB*, 80/94). Toundi is warned by his fellow African that when a white person starts addressing an African with such an honorific title, it means that trouble is brewing for the African in question.

One could therefore argue that Reed translated the French titles in a way that preserves the portraiture of the class difference that exist in the source texts between the white colonialists and the Africans, and which was a dominant theme of African literature (Batchelor, 2009), which implies that his actions in translating French titles were thus influenced by the norms of the literary field in which he worked.

In conclusion, I would argue that Reed's translations of the forms of address used by Oyono was influenced by the field in which he worked, as his choices enabled him to faithfully represent the author's cultural world view in the target texts.

### 5.3.2.5 Use of vernacular words and expressions

African writers in European languages are known to use words from their native languages. These writers resort to code-mixing and code-switching when words or expressions do not have equivalents in the European languages and are also untranslatable into the languages of their writings (Bandia, 2008:109). Code-mixing is when a foreign word is introduced into an utterance, which code-switching is when a speaker introduces a foreign expression into his/her speech (Bandia, 1996). Given that the use of such indigenous words may pose a problem of understanding to a foreign reader, some authors do resort to cushioning, which is a strategy in which the meaning of the words is explained in context or by footnotes or endnotes (Suh, 2005:147). In *UVB* and *LVNM*, Ferdinand Oyono has used words from his native Bulu language to refer to local concepts that cannot be translated, and also to preserve the cultural identity of his Community. Examples of Oyono's use of his native Bulu words and their translations are analysed below:

- i) **ST:** *Accroupis sur les talons, assis sur des cases vides, ils sirotaient leur arki tout en causant bruyamment (LVNM, 12).*

**TT:** *They squatted on their heels or sat on packing cases, sipping their arki and talking boisterously (TOMM, 6).*

The word is the name of the indigenous gin that is enjoyed by the local community. The brewing and consumption of this drink is banned by the colonial authority and the Christian church, but the people continue to brew and enjoy it clandestinely. It becomes a symbol of cultural resistance by which the people resist the colonial attempt to kill their culture. In his translation, Reed maintained the same native word in the target text to ensure that the cultural world view of the source text is preserved in the translation. I thus believe that his action in this case was influenced by the poetics of the African literary field in which he worked.

- ii) **ST:** *Massés à proximité du Cercle européen, nous nous sommes éparpillés dans les massifs d'essessongos (UVB, 40).*

**TT:** *Massed near the European Club we were beginning to infiltrate into the clump of **essessongo trees** (HB, 27).*

The highlighted word in this case refers to 'elephant grass'. The grass has some traditional significance to the author's culture as it is seen in the case where Meka uses it to ward off ill luck (*LVNM*, 142). It is probably because of this traditional role of

the grass that the author prefers to use a native word to express it. Reed also maintained the word in his translation to recreate the author's cultural world view in the target texts, but added the word, 'tree' to his translation, which does not exist in the original word. It could be said that this addition was as a result of Reed misinterpreting the concept in the source text to mean that *essessongo* is a tree, and not a grass, which is what the original word refers to. I would argue that this misinterpretation of the source text meaning was due to Reed's lack of sufficient exposure to the cultural settings of the source text, which would have enabled him to grasp the full meaning of the concept (Bandia, 2008). This implies that his experience working in the African literary field was not enough to endow him with the habitus necessary to fully grasp the logos of African literature in European languages.

iii) **ST:** *Son ombre se projeta sur le mur lézardé de l'aba ou couraient deux araignées (UVB, 22).*

**TT:** *His shadow was thrown on to the cracked wall of the aba. Two spiders were running over it (HB, 5).*

The word in this case refers to the traditional hut. Oyono's use of the word is again his desire to valorise the world view of his native Bulu culture. In this case, the meaning of the word is left to be guessed from the accompanying lexical items 'mur lézardé' which means 'cracked wall'. Reed has carried over the same Bulu word in his translation and this had the impact of recreating the native Bulu culture of the author that is valorised in the source text. It could therefore be argued that Reed's translation in this case was influenced by the poetics of the literary field, as he preserved the source text style as well as the inherent world view expressed by the author.

iv) **ST:** *Les Blancs regardaient les danseurs de bilaba (UVB, 53).*

**TT:** *The white men were watching the bilaba dancers (HB, 41).*

The highlighted word in this example refers to a traditional Bulu dance. Oyono uses it to portray the traditional ways of life in his Bulu culture. In this case, he uses a footnote to explain the type of dance in question, thereby helping the reader to easily understand the text. The use of a footnote to clarify meaning in this case is probably to avoid the ambiguity that may arise from the word, since it may refer to a song, an instrument or a dance. In his translation, Reed carried across the same Bulu word,

and it could be said that this enabled him to recreate the same cultural world view of the source text in his translation. He equally used a footnote to explain the meaning of the word.

- v) **ST:** *Eh bien, Meka, aurait pu leur faire voir qu'il em ... la médaille qu'on allait lui donner en se présentant là-bas ... tout simplement avec ... un bila !* (LVNM, 185).

**TT:** *Well, Meka could have shown them what they could do with the medal they were going to give him – by turning up – with nothing on ... except a bila!* (TOMM, 165).

In this example, the highlighted word refers to a cache-sexe in the author's native language. Here Engamba is creating humour in suggesting that Meka would have disrespected the whites by going for his medal award ceremony dressed in nothing but a cache-sexe, so that the white administrator would have been forced to stoop to pin the medal on the cache-sexe. The author also uses a footnote in this case to explain the meaning of the word. Although it is humorous, Oyono uses this instance to pass across the message that the Africans have always been the ones bowing to Western cultural assimilation, and it would be good if the situation could be reversed. The white man stooping to pin a medal on a traditional cache-sexe would thus symbolise a situation in which a white man respects African tradition. This implies that the word does not only portray the cultural world view, but also an ideological one. Reed uses the same word in his translation, and also includes a footnote to explain the meaning of the word. It could be said that his intention was to preserve the ideological and cultural world views of the author. This aligned his translation with the norms of the African literary field in which writers use language as means with which to express the cultural and ideological world views of their local communities.

- vi) **ST:** *Pour eux, je n'étais plus que le «Ngovina ya ngal a ves zut bisalak a be metua»* (UVB, 102).

**TT:** *'For them I was «Ngovina ya ngal a ves zut bisalak a be metua»* (HB, 98).

This example involves the author's use of code-switching. The incidence occurs when the commandant is confronting his wife about her extra-marital affair. He tells her that the natives are all aware of the affair and are mocking him in their language. Oyono uses cushioning to explain that the Bulu words mean 'the Commandant

whose wife opens her legs in ditches and in cars'. By using this code-switching, Oyono seeks to portray the fact that the commandant has been brought down from his high status to the same level as the natives as a result of his wife's behaviour. Reed maintained the code-switching in the translation, thereby preserving the cultural world view source text author. His action, I believe, was thus influenced by the African literary field in which he was working.

In conclusion, in translating the native Bulu words that Oyono uses in *UVB* and *LVNM*, Reed maintained the same words in the target texts, thereby ensuring that the cultural and ideological world views of the author are preserved. He did this consistently for all the instances of the use of native words, except for the case of *essessongo*, where his misinterpretation of the word led to a mistranslation in the target text. His actions were thus constrained by factors of the literary field in which he worked, except for the case of *essessongo*, where his decision was influenced by his individual habitus.

#### 5.3.2.6 Distorted words

In *UVB* and *LVNM*, there are a number of words that have been distorted from their real forms. The function of this distortion is to provide humour, but also to show the failure of the Western colonial authority to impose foreign concepts on the Africans. The Africans find it difficult to pronounce the words in French as they are supposed to be, and they therefore distort them in a way that makes them more natural to the phonetic system of their native language. This implies that such words are culture-bound, as they cannot be understood out of the specific cultural context of their usage. Below are examples of Oyono's use of distorted words followed by their translations:

- i) **ST:** *Après le «kanon» et la «mistayette», la bombe à fumée ! (LVNM, 29).*

**TT:** *First the gun, then the machine gun and now the smoke bomb! (TOMM, 22).*

The first words are a distorted form of the French word 'canon', in which the speaker makes the [k] sound stronger than in the original word, as a result of the influence of his native language. The author thus uses the letter 'k' instead of the 'c' to mark this difference in the pronunciation of the sound. The second word is a distortion of the

French word 'mitrailleuse', which means 'machine gun'. The first thing that stands out in Reed's translation is that 'cannon' is translated as 'gun'. In my view, the translator preferred this word to the direct equivalent 'cannon' because it would not fit well in the gradation of items listed in the expression. The speaker is talking about how white people keep upgrading the weapons they manufacture to more dangerous levels, and the translation portrays that ascending gradation more than the original. Given that the weapons in question are of Western origin, it is my contention that Reed's habitus as a European influenced his interpretation of the original text as a misrepresentation of 'cannon' and 'gun', which led him to opt for the latter in the translation.

Another important aspect of Reed's translation of these distorted words is that he neutralised the distortions in the target text, thereby neutralising the humour, as well as the cultural clash contained in the original words. It could be said that his choice in this case was because by reproducing the same distortion in the target text, readers would not have understood the meaning behind the distorted words, given that sounds at the root of the distortions are not the same in the target text words as in the original. He therefore opted to translate the words in a way that would be understood by readers of the target system.

ii) **ST:** *C'est là que j'ai rencontré M. Kobbingôlôm, mon acheteur de cacao habituel (LVNM, 27).*

**TT:** **There I met M. Kobbingôlôm, who is my usual cocoa buyer (TOMM, 20).**

The distortion in this case has to do with a European name which is mispronounced by the speaker. The original name is the Greek name 'Krominououlos'. The author uses a footnote to clarify the real name, since it is foreign to the source text readers. Reed's translation maintains the original distortion, which in my view was because the original word is also foreign to English, so the distortion can apply to the target language of the translation. His use of footnotes also ensures that the target readers of the translation get the same understanding of the name as the author intended the source text readers to do.

iii) **ST:** *... Meka donna son prénom «Laurent» qu'il prononçait «Roron» et que le brigadier écrivit «Roro» sur répétition de son second (LVNM, 142).*

**TT:** ... *Meka gave his christian name, Lawrence, which he pronounced 'Roron' and which the sergeant wrote Roro at the dictation of his assistant (TOMM, 127).*

Here, Meka cannot pronounce the name 'Laurent' he was given at baptism, and this shows the failure of the French colonial attempt to assimilate Africans into French culture. In his translation, Reed maintained the distortion, thereby preserving the humour. He, however, translated the real name 'Laurent' with its English equivalent 'Lawrence', and this affects the way the distortion is created with the final vowel. The final vowel in 'Laurent' is rounded, while it is spread in 'Lawrence'. It is thus difficult to see how the spread vowel leads to the round vowel in the distortion. It could, however, be argued that Reed was more interested in giving the target readers the same humour and sarcasm of the source text, and this made him to ignore the discrepancy between the translated name and its distortion.

iv) **ST:** *C'est le vin d'honneur', mon commandant, dit-il avec un large sourire, le vin d'honneur' seulement (LVNM, 55).*

**TT:** *'It is the drinks sah', he said with a wide smile. 'Just the drinks ... (TOMM, 47).*

In this case, the speaker mispronounces the French word '*honneur*'. The term '*vin d'honneur*' refers to the drinks that are served to special guests at an event in French culture. The speaker's distortion of the word again indicates the failure of the French colonial system to assimilate Africans into the French culture. Reed's translation neutralises the distortion as Reed opted for the English word 'drinks'. This is probably because there is no equivalent concept of '*vin d'honneur*' in the English culture. It can, however, be observed that Reed used a Pidgin word 'sah' to translate '*mon commandant*', instead of the English equivalent 'sir', and it could be said that his intention was to compensate for the loss of the distortion by introducing a word that portrays the speaker's inability to speak the European language fluently. I would therefore argue that Reed's translation ensures that the language distortion in the source text has been preserved in the target text.

v) **ST: Champagne!** *dit-il (LVNM, 55).*

**TT:** *'Champagne! he said (TOMM, 47).*

Just like in the previous example, the speaker in this case mispronounces the word 'champagne'. It can be observed that Reed used the same distorted word in his translation, and it could be said that this was made easy by the fact that the English word is actually borrowed from French and its pronunciation maintains the initial French consonant [ʃ] instead of using [tʃ], which would be more natural in English. I would therefore argue that by using the same sound to recreate the distortion of the source text, Reed's intention was to ensure that the nature of the distortion and its effect on the reader are preserved in the target text.

vi) **ST:** *En avant, marsssse! Commanda l'homme (UVB, 51).*

**TT:** *'Forward marsss!' ordered the man (HB, 40).*

In this case the guard mispronounces the French word 'marche', which means 'to march' in English. The guard is giving an order to the pupils to 'march' during the reception of the commandant. In the translation, Reed maintained the mispronunciation of the source text word. However, the distortion may be more difficult to be understood in the translation, given that the source text sound from which the distortion is made [ʃ] is closer to [s] than it is to the target text sound [tʃ]. One could argue that Reed saw that this would not affect the target text readers' ability to understand the original word from which the distortion emerged, because the discrepancy is minimised by the context described by the word. This implies that his intention was to ensure that the target readers get the same effect of humour as the source texts readers.

vii) **ST:** *Pour faire singe, il n'y a que missié! dit Sophie en s'esclaffant (UVB, 56).*

**TT:** *'No one can pull faces like Monsieur,' said Sophie shrieking with laughter (HB, 45).*

In this example, Sophie mispronounces the French title 'Monsieur' when talking about her white lover. The English equivalent of the title is 'Sir' or 'Mister'. Reed chose to use the original French word in the translation, thereby neutralising the distortion that appears in the original. Reed's choice in this case is difficult to explain as it is not consistent with the other ways he has translated distorted words. One would have expected him to use the English equivalent as he did in the examples (i) and (iv) discussed above, or he would have maintained the French distortion as he

did in the other examples that have been analysed. This example underscores the question of the ability of translators to be consistent with a particular approach during the process of a translation activity, which implies that causality in translation action is complex in nature (Marais 2014).

viii) **ST: Pli d'arcol ... dit-il en posant bruyamment le bocal sur la table, pli d'arcol ... (UVB, 120).**

**TT: 'Some more arcoo,' he said, 'some more arcoo' (HB, 120).**

In this case, the medical doctor mispronounces the French words '*plus*' and '*alcool*', which means 'more' and 'alcohol' in English, respectively. The irony here is that one would not expect a medical doctor who has been educated in the Western tradition to mispronounce words in the same way as the uneducated villagers have been doing. The author in this case intends to portray the extent to which the French assimilatory policy has failed, as even those Africans educated in the Western system have not fully fitted into their cultural system. In the translation, Reed recreated the distortion by distorting the word 'alcohol', while leaving the words 'some more' in their original forms. It could be said that this recreation enabled him to maintain the cultural backlash and humour that are evoked in the original, thereby ensuring that the author's world view is maintained in the target text.

It can thus be concluded that in translating the distorted words used by Oyono in *UVB* and *LVNM*, Reed's actions were predominantly influenced by the field in which he worked, as his choices enabled him to recreate the distortions in a way that the target readers would understand, and the author's cultural world view would be preserved.

### 5.3.2.7 Invectives

Invectives are insults which are expressed in the form of verbal denunciation or attack using acerbic and abusive language (Kodah, 2012:1). They are a manifestation of verbal hostility and the meaning of the words used to express the insults, are usually context-bound. This implies that an invective may not be understood out of its cultural context. Oyono makes use of invectives in *UVB* and *LVNM* to portray situations of hostility between the characters of his novels. Some of the instances of the use of invectives in the novels are analysed below:

i) **ST:** *Qu'est-ce qu'il se croyait, ce petit-fils de pygmées ?* (LVNM, 122).

**LT:** *Who did he think he was, this grandson of pygmies?*

**TT:** *Who did he think he was, this grandson of the pygmies?* (TOMM, 109).

This insult is expressed during the reception that follows Meka's medal award. One of the servants to the white administrator asks the Africans to drink responsibly and this provokes the anger of the speaker who throws insults at him. The pygmies are a forest-dwelling community neighbouring the Bulu people in the south of Cameroon. They are marginalised and stigmatised because of their attachment to nature and their physical appearance. Addressing someone as the grandson of the pygmies is therefore an insult that would only be understood within the context of the relationship between the Bulus and the pygmies. Reed used a foreignising approach in translating the invective, and it could be said that his intention was to preserve the cultural world view of the source text author in the target text, while at the same time fitting into the poetics of the literary system into which he was translating.

ii) **ST:** *Nos oreilles ne souffriront plus des paroles d'un esclave, un chien d'esclaves* (LVNM, 122).

**LT:** *Our ears will no longer suffer from the words of a slave, a dog of slaves*

**TT:** *Now our ears will no longer suffer the words of a slave, the dog of a slave* (TOMM, 110).

The insult in this example takes place at the same scene as the previous example. One of the speakers also insults the servant as the dog of a slave. This portrays the class system in the Bulu culture, in which slaves used to be considered as the lowest class of people. The image of a dog is also portrayed here to be that of an animal which is held in very low esteem by human beings. Calling someone a dog would therefore indicate that the person has no value. It is even worse when someone is called the dog of a slave. Reed translated the expression literally, and I would argue that this maintains the denigrating sense of the insult and also preserves Oyono's Bulu cultural world view that is expressed in the source text.

iii) **ST:** *Lève-toi ! Cochon malade!* (LVNM, 137).

**LT:** *Get up! Sick pig!*

**TT:** *Get up you pig!* (TOMM, 122).

This invective is uttered by the guard who arrests Meka after the medal award ceremony. When Meka falls as a result of the forceful way in which he is handled, the guard insultingly asks him to get up. Reed omitted the qualifier 'sick' in his translation, and it could be said that even though the effect of the invective is still preserved in the target text, the omission alleviates the intensity of the insult. Could Reed have been aiming for fluency, and if so, what makes the translation more fluent than the source text in this case? I would contend that Reed omitted the source text qualifier in his translation because his primary intention was to ensure that the target text preserved the effect of the invectives, and not to translate every element of the source text expression. His target readers would therefore get the same effect on the invective in this case as the source text readers did, even though they would miss out on some details of the source text.

iv) **ST:** *Ô rat qui profite d'une nuit d'orage pour piller le quartier européen!* (LVNM, 138).

**LT:** *Oh rat which takes advantage of a stormy night to loot the European neighbourhood.*

**TT:** *You have used the storm as a cover to come loot the European area.* (TOMM, 123).

This example takes place at the same scene as in the previous example. The same guard continues to insult Meka by calling him a rat who has come to steal in the white neighbourhood. In his translation, Reed omitted the insult completely, and it can be observed that this intervention on the part of the translator gives a different message to the target text reader than what is given to the source text reader. Omission as a translation strategy is used when something in the source text is considered irrelevant in the target text by the translator (Chesterman, 2016). Could it then be said that Reed considered the invective in the source text as irrelevant to the message? I would argue that the insult in the source text is an important part of the message, and its omission would make the target readers miss out on the effect that the invective would have been felt by the source text reader. Reed's decision in this case could therefore only be an indication of inconsistency on his part, and this highlights the fact that translators are not always consistent with the norms they set out to follow, as the factors that constrain their actions are complex in nature (Marais, 2014).

v) **ST:** *Meka le traita de fils des règles* (LVNM, 148).

**LT:** *Meka called him a son of menses.*

**TT:** *Meka called him a child of the woman's curse* (TOMM, 133).

The invective is expressed by Meka when he is locked up in the police cell. This insult reflects the belief system of the author's Bulu community regarding menstruation, which is considered a period during which it would be abominable for a child to be conceived. 'Menstruation' does not appear in the translation as Reed opted to replace it with the expression '*the woman's curse*'. Unlike other cases in which Reed's decisions have been to make meaning clearer in the target texts, it could be argued that this translation instead makes meaning less clear as the reader is likely to wonder what the woman's curse is that the text is referring to. I would contend that Reed's decision was influenced by his desire to neutralise the vulgarity expressed by the original word by using a less vulgar word, so as to give the target readers a more politically correct translation. This implies that this choice was influenced by his opinion of what was proper or improper to say and had nothing to do with the poetics of the African literary field, in which writers did not shy away from vulgar expressions. In Bourdieusian terms, one would say that his action was influenced by his individual habitus, in the sense that his avoidance of vulgar expressions could be said to be the result of how his social background had shaped his perception of what was decent or indecent.

vi) **ST:** *Espèce de fainéant ! de paresseux ! cria Madame* (UVB, 79).

**LT:** *species of an idler! Of a loafer!*

**TT:** *Idle creature! You lazy idle loafer! Shrieked Madame* (HB, 73).

The invectives in this case are more of standard French origin, but whose meaning is easy to understand in the African cultural context. In this incidence, the wife of the colonial administrator finds her laundry man asleep and pours insults on him. The situation is aggravated by the fact that she is bitter because she knows that all her servants are aware of her extramarital affair. In this translation, it can be observed that Reed preserved the message of the first part of the insult, while adding more meaning to the message of the second part. The first part could thus be said to be a faithful representation of the source text message. It can, however, be observed that Reed combined three different words of insults to translate what is just one insult in

the original. Any of the words *lazy*, *idle* or *loafer* could have been used to translate the French word ' *paresseux*', but Reed combined them, and it could be argued that this makes the invective in his translation stronger than that expressed in the original. I would argue that Reed's decision in this case was motivated by his intention to produce a translation that was fluent to the target readers, while preserving the effect of the source text, given that a literal one might have minimised the effect of the invective.

In conclusion, Reed's translation of invectives in *UVB* and *LVNM* indicates that he was influenced by both the literary field, which enabled him to preserve the cultural world view of the source texts, and also by his individual habitus, which influenced his interventions in the texts in a way that makes some of the target text messages to be different from those of the source texts.

### 5.3.2.8 Semantic shifts

According to Bandia (2008:102), a semantic shift is a situation in which "a European-language word is assigned a new meaning that can only be understood within the native African context in which it is used". This implies that the new meaning of the European language words are no longer native to their European native speakers, as they have been indigenised into the semantic realities of the African speaker's native language. This form of language use is characteristic of African literature in European languages, in which African writers adapt European languages to express their African thoughts (Vakunta, 2011). Such is the case with Ferdinand Oyono, who has indigenised French Words and expressions into his Bulu context in order to convey his cultural world view. Below are instances of the use of semantic shifts in *UVB* and *LVNM*, and their translations by John Reed. The source text (ST) expressions are followed by literal translations (LT) before the target text renditions (TT), so as to give a clear understanding of the translator's strategies in the transfer process:

- i) **ST:** *Comme aujourd'hui, c'était la journée des palabres, reprit Meka, la véranda de la Résidence était pleine quand j'y suis arrivé (LVNM, 25).*

**LT:** *As today was **the day of deliberations**, Meka went on, the veranda of the Residence was crowded when I got there.*

**TT:** *'As it is **the day for indaba**', Meka went on, 'the veranda of the Residence was crowded when I got there' (TOMM, 18).*

This highlighted expression refers to the day when the village or community council meets. This meaning can only be understood in an African context, for the word ‘*palabre*’ in French simply means ‘endless discussion’. The word has thus been localised to refer to something that is culture-bound within the speaker’s community. In the translation, Reed used the word ‘*indaba*’, which is a Zulu word to translate ‘*palabre*’. ‘*Indaba*’ is the direct equivalent of ‘*palabre*’ as used in the source text, but it cannot be understood by a target reader out of Southern Africa. This implies that the translation could create confusion in the minds of readers who might not understand the meaning of ‘*indaba*’, especially as there are no footnotes or annotations (Appiah, 1993/2004) to explain the word. Reed’s use of the word could have been influenced by the fact that he lived in Southern Africa for many years and was thus exposed to the concept of *indaba*. It could therefore be argued that his action in this case was influenced by his individual habitus, given that his interpretation of the source text was informed by the past experiences he had been exposed to, and which were contributing to shaping his perception of the reality he faced at the time of the translation.

ii) **ST:** *Un rat-panthère s’échappa d’un fourré, traversa la piste à toute allure et disparut dans un buisson (LVNM, 157).*

**LT:** *A rat-panther escaped from a thicket, ran across the path and disappeared into a bush.*

**TT:** *A panther-rat ran out of a thicket, darted across the path and vanished into a bush (TOMM, 141).*

In this case, two French words ‘*rat*’ and ‘*panther*’ have been blended to refer to an animal in the author’s cultural context. The word may thus not be understood out of the author’s context of usage, since he has adapted it to express his cultural world view. Reed adopted a literal approach in the translation, and it could be said that this enabled him to align his translation with the African literary field by faithfully representing the source text concept, thereby preserving the author’s cultural world view.

iii) **ST:** *Pour apprécier le rat palmiste cuit à la citronnelle, aux aubergines sauvages et aux piments comme celui-ci, il faut le manger sans autre chose (LVNM, 82).*

**LT:** *To appreciate palm rat cooked with lemongrass and wild egg-fruit and peppers like this you must eat it by itself*

**TT:** *To appreciate **palm-squirrel cooked a la citronelle** with wild egg-fruit and pimentoes like this you must eat it by itself (TOMM, 71).*

The term in this case refers to a culinary item in the author's culture, which consists of an edible rodent prepared with lemongrass. Food items are culture-bound in the sense that different cultures have different culinary traditions which do not always have equivalences in other cultures. In other words, even though this item is written in French, a native French speaker would not understand it as it has been localised in the author's native culture. In the translation, the name of the rodent, *rat palmiste*, is translated by the use of the equivalent term in English, *palm-squirrel*; but the French term *cooked à la citronelle*, which refers to the spice used in the cooking, is maintained in the target text. One could thus say that Reed's translation introduced a foreign expression in the target text, which was not present in the original. I would argue that the reason for translating the term in this way was because the translator wanted to maintain the attractiveness of the dish, which could have been lost with the use of the English equivalent 'cooked with lemongrass'. He therefore opted for an exotic term that would preserve the attractiveness of the dish as expressed in the original text. This implies that he wanted the target readers to respond to the translation in the same way as the source text readers could have done (Nida and Taber, 1969).

iv) **ST:** *Il comprenait deux **gâteaux de maïs** bien croustillants, une pâte de concombre et un morceau de vieille vipère cuite à point (LVNM, 33).*

**LT:** *It consisted of two very crisp **maize cakes**, cucumber paste and a piece of well-cooked left-over viper.*

**TT:** *It consisted of two very crisp **maize cakes**, cucumber paste and a scrap of left-over viper, cooked to perfection (TOMM, 26).*

This example also has to do with a food item. The word refers to a local dish made of mashed maize that is wrapped in banana leaves and then cooked until it boils (Awung, 2014:27). Reed translated it literally, which may be misleading to the target text reader who could actually interpret the term as a baked dish, just like a cake is baked in the Western tradition. Reed's action in this case could be explained by the fact that he did not have enough exposure to the cultural context of the source text author in order to understand the meaning of the term. He thus interpreted it based on the European concept of 'cake', thereby misrepresenting the author's cultural world view in his translation. This implies that his action was influenced by his social

background as a European whose experiences in the African literary field were not enough for him to fully grasp the way African writers used European languages in their works.

v) **ST:** *Attendez la boule de banane, dit Kelara (LVNM, 82).*

**LT:** *Wait for the banana ball', said Kelara.*

**TT:** *'Wait for the banana dumplings', said Kelara (TOMM, 71).*

This example equally refers to a local food item in the author's Bulu tradition, which is a dish of mashed bananas that is served with sauce. In the translation, Reed translated 'boule' with the English word 'dumplings'. It can be observed that while the two words may be similar with regard to the shape of the item, they do not refer to the same thing. The target text word in English refers to something that is baked, while the food item in the source text is boiled and then mashed. The translation thus gives the impression that the item in question is some kind of banana pastry, which is not the case. It could be argued that Reed's interpretation in this case was again influenced by his sociocultural background, which led him to misunderstand the world view of the source text author.

vi) **ST:** *C'était l'heure de repas habituel de bâtons de manioc au poisson (UVB, 19).*

**LT:** *It was time for the usual meal of fish and cassava batons.*

**TT:** *It was the time of the day for the customary meal of fish and cassava sticks (HB, 1).*

The highlighted term is also a local food item in the author's culture. It refers to a local dish of cassava paste wrapped in banana leaves in the shape of a baton and cooked (Awung, 2014:27). Reed's translation could be said to be misleading to the target reader in that the term 'cassava sticks' may give the impression that the people in the novel were eating the sticks or stems of cassava plants. I would argue this mistranslation was again caused by Reed's insufficient exposure to the author's cultural setting, which left him with only his European sociocultural background as the lens to interpret the world view of the source text author.

In conclusion, it could be argued that in translating French terms depicting local items in the author's culture, Reed's actions were constrained by his individual habitus, as he relied on his European sociocultural background to interpret the world

view of the source texts author. This led to him making decisions that portray a different picture in the target texts from what the reality is in the source texts.

### 5.3.2.9 Proper names

The translation of names can be a challenging task because of the cultural implications attached to them (Fernandes, 2006; Tymoczko, 2016). According to Tymoczko (2016:223), names should not be taken as “islands of repose”, which should be carried across to the target text without any changes, given that there are semantic, semiotic, and phonological implications imbedded in names. This implies that the common practice of leaving source text names unchanged in translation may lead to misrepresentations in the target text. It is within this context that the strategies that Reed used in translating proper names in *UVB* and *LVNM* were analysed.

In translating the names of people and places, it can be observed that Reed maintained most of the source text names in the translation as can be seen in the following examples: **Akomo** (*UVB*, 19; *HB*, 1); **M'foula** (*UVB*, 20; *HB*, 2); **Toundi** (*UVB*, 24; *HB*, 9); **Dangan** (*UVB*, 28; *HB*, 14); **Meka** (*LVNM*, 9; *TOMM*, 3); **Kelara** (*LVNM*, 9; *TOMM*, 3); **Doum** (*LVNM*, 16; *TOMM*, 10); **Zourian** (*LVNM*, 46; *TOMM*, 38); **Moreau** (*UVB*, 70; *HB*, 60); **Salvain** (*UVB*, 62; *HB*, 52); and **Foucouni** (*LVNM*, 54; *TOMM*, 45). It could be argued that Reed's strategy in this case ensured that the cultural setting of the world of the source text author was preserved in the translations. When it comes to Western, or baptismal, names of African characters, Reed translated them by using English equivalents as in the cases of **Ignace** (*LVNM*, 21), translated as **Ignatius** (*TOMM*, 14), and **Laurent** (*LVNM*, 142), translated as **Laurence** (*TOMM*, 127). It could be said that the effect of this choice is that it makes it easier for the target readers to identify with the Christian names in English to better grasp the assimilatory aspect of Western religion.

One could, however, argue that Reed's translations lead to the phonological misrepresentation of some of the names, given that the same orthography does not produce the same sounds in English and French. This is particularly noticeable in the letter combination 'ou' which gives the sound [u], but which is more likely to give the sound [au] in English. Reed admitted to this misrepresentation in the interview by acknowledging that it would have been better if he had translated the name 'Toundi' as 'Tundi' because many target text readers tend to pronounce it as [taundi]. Other

examples in this regard can be seen in **Doum** (LVNM, 16; TOMM, 10) and **Zourian** (LVNM, 46; TOMM, 38). Reed's translation in this case gives the target readers a misrepresentation of the sound sequences of the names in the source texts, and this underscores the need to consider the phonological aspect of names when translating them (Tymocsko, 2016:224).

When it comes to nicknames, Reed seemed to adopt a different approach from the one indicated above. This is because nicknames are usually descriptive in nature and have semantic implications which needs to be reflected in the translations (Nord, 2003). The nicknames used by Oyono portray the relationship between the Africans and representatives of the colonial administration, which implies that they reflect the anti-colonial theme of the novels. Reed thus adopted a foreignising approach in his translations as can be seen in the following examples:

- i) **ST:** *Il s'y rendait quelquefois pour aller se faire piquer à la Crève des Nègres* (LVNM, 11).

**TT:** *Though he sometimes went in to have himself injected at the Black Man's Grave ...* (TOMM, 5).

The nickname in this case is used to describe the hospital, which is neglected by the white colonial administration because it caters only for black patients. The author uses the nickname to portray the colonial system's disregard for the welfare of Africans. Reed's translation ensures that the descriptive references of the nickname, as well as the inherent anticolonial sarcasm are preserved. It could thus be argued that his action in this case was influenced by the literary field, given that his decision was aligned with the thematic focus of the African literary field, as well as the target readers' expected reception of the translation.

- ii) **ST:** *On l'a trouvé ensanglanté, écrasé sur sa motocyclette par l'une des branches du fromager géant que les indigènes appellent Le broyeur des Blancs* (UVB, 30).

**TT:** *They found him bloody and crushed on his motorcycle by the side of a branch from the giant cotton tree that the natives call the 'Hammer of the whites'* (HB, 16).

The bolded nickname above (ii) refers to the village tree and the danger it poses to people using the road. The name portrays the fact that the villagers know of this danger and avoid it, while the whites do not and fall victim to it. Just like in the

previous example, it could also be said that Reed's translation in this case ensures that the functional reference of the nickname is preserved, thereby ensuring that the target text readers get the same effect of the nickname as the source text readers did.

- iii) **ST:** *Nous nous assîmes sur les marches de l'entrée et il me demanda ce que je pensais de **Zeuil-de-Panthère*** (UVB, 39).

**TT:** *We sat down on the entrance steps and he asked me what I thought of **Panther-Eye*** (HB, 25).

The nickname in this example is in *Français petit-nègre* (a term referring to how uneducated Africans communicated in French) and it stands for '*les yeux de panthère*', which means 'panther eyes'. It is a nickname given by the natives to the commandant because of his piercing eyes which remind them of a panther. The description reflects the awe in which the Africans hold the colonial administrator. It can be said that Reed's translation preserves the descriptive reference of the nickname, even though the target text refers to only one eye while the original refers to both eyes. I would argue that this does not affect the message in the sense that the target readers would still be able to grasp the descriptive and functional references of the name.

- iv) **ST:** *La nuit dernière, le quartier indigène a reçu la visite de **Gosier-D'Oiseau**, le commissaire de police* (UVB, 37).

**TT:** *Last night the location had a visit from **Gullet**, the Chief of Police* (HB, 24).

The bolded name is the nickname the natives give to the police commissioner. The name humorously describes his rather long neck, '*Gosier-D'Oiseau*' which means 'bird's neck'. It can be observed that in his translation, Reed recreated the nickname by coining a new one which also refers to the bearer's long neck. It could be argued that Reed opted for this choice because he thought that a literal translation would not have produced the same humorous effect as the source text did, so he coined the term 'Gullet' in order to give the target readers the same effect that the source text readers had. The word 'gullet' does not, however, refer only to a bird and it could therefore be said that this might make the translation to lose the reference of the source text nickname. I would, however, argue that this does not affect the message of the text because the context explains the reason for which the commissioner was

given the nickname, thereby ensuring that the descriptive reference of the name and the humour it generates are not lost to the target readers.

In conclusion, it could be argued that Reed translated proper names in *UVB* and *LVNM* in a way that preserved the semantic value and cultural setting of the source texts, even though he seemed to have paid little attention to the phonological aspects of the names. This implies that his actions in the translation of proper names were influenced by the literary field in which he was working.

### 5.3.2.10 Hybrid language forms

African writers in European languages tend to use more than one language in their writings, which reflect the multilingual nature of their societies (Bandia, 2008:140). Such is the case of Oyono, who has resorted to a style of hybrid language use that reflects the way language was experienced in the Cameroonian society during French colonisation. Such language use is culture-bound, and one needs to be sufficiently exposed to its context of usage in order to understand it. Translating such hybrid language use would also be challenging as the target system may not reflect the same hybrid language use (Bandia, 2012:425). It was in this regard that Reed's translations of hybrid language formations in *UVB* and *LVNM* were analysed as evidenced in the examples below.

#### A) Le français petit-nègre

*Français petit-nègre* refers to the way uneducated Africans spoke the French language. It is a broken form of French which was used by the local employees to communicate with their European employers or with other Africans from different parts of the French colony. Oyono uses this hybrid language form to portray the impact of a foreign culture on Africans, as well as the class difference between Europeans and Africans in the French colonies. John Reed translated all cases of the use of *Français petit-nègre* by using *Pidgin English* as can be seen in the examples below:

- i) **ST:** *J'espère que tu as compris pourquoi je ne pourrais attendre que « petit Joseph pati roti en enfer » (UVB, 35).*  
**TT:** *'I think you see why I can't wait till «small Joseph go burn in hell »' (HB, 22).*

- ii) **ST:** Y en a vérité, *Sep*, dit encore le grade noir (UVB, 38).  
**TT:** '*It is true, sah,*' said the N.C.O. again (HB, 25).
- iii) **ST:** – *Movié!* s'exclama le garde, **Zeuil-de-Panthère cogner comme Gosier-D'Oiseau! Lui donner moi coup de pied qui en a fait comme soufat'soud ... Zeuil y en a pas rire ...** (UVB, 39).  
**TT:** '*Man,*' said the sentry, '**Panther-Eye beat like Gullet. Him kick me bam! Go like dynamite. Panther-Eye no joke**' (HB, 25).
- iv) **ST:** Il baragouina qu'il avait trente ans de métier et que « **lui y en a touzou bon ksinier** » (UVB, 58).  
**TT:** He went on about his thirty years of experience, and how he had been '**all time very good cookboy**' (HB, 47).
- v) **ST:** **Mon z'ami**, dit Gosier-d'Oiseau en imitant faussement le petit negre, **nous pas buveurs indigenes!** (UVB, 60).  
**TT:** '*Man,*' said Gullet in a poor imitation of pidgin, '**we no be native drinkers.**' (HB, 49).

The effect of Reed's use of *Pidgin English* to translate *Français petit-nègre*, is that it produces an equivalent hybrid language form that was prevalent in the English colonies of West Africa. The problem with this strategy is that the two language forms in question are not equivalent to each other as they are different in nature and function, and different in their respective societies of usage (Bandia, 2008). While *Français petit-nègre* was a form of broken French, *Pidgin English* is not 'broken English', as it is a creole whose origin can be traced back to the fifteenth century with the arrival of Portuguese slave merchants on the West African coast. The language then developed and grew from a pidgin into a creole with combination of different African and European languages, with its current English-based form being the result of the extended presence of the British in the West African region (Awung, 2013:7). The two languages can therefore not be considered as equivalent, especially as *Pidgin English* was also spoken in non-British colonies such as Cameroon, which explains why Oyono also uses it in *UVB* and *LVNM* (Awung, 2014:27)., as shall be seen in the example that follows.

Bandia (2008:197) has argued that the translation of heteroglossia in African literature between European languages involves a process of conversion in which the oral tradition of a colonial source language is transferred into another colonial language in a manner that is appropriate for the receiving language culture. This

implies that in translating a language form such as *Français petit-nègre* into another European language, the translator has to find a language form which has an equivalent function in the receiving language culture. It could therefore be said that Reed considered Pidgin as having the same function in the target language culture as *Français petit-nègre* did in the Francophone culture of the source text, especially as Anglophone writers from West Africa, such as Achebe, use Pidgin in their writings to portray class asymmetry between speakers of English and Pidgin. It thus seems that Reed saw Pidgin as having the same diglossic relationship with English as *Français petit-nègre* had with French in Africa.

## B) Pidgin English

As mentioned in the previous example, Oyono also makes use of *Pidgin English* in his novels to reflect the hybrid nature of discursive patterns in the Cameroonian society in general, particularly his Bulu community. Reed maintained the *Pidgin English* expressions in his translations as can be seen in the examples below:

- i) **ST:** *Comment aurait-il pu oublier l'**africa-gin** dont quelques gouttes lui étaient tombées sur la langue a un âge ou il n'avait pas de poils sur le ventre ... (LVNM, 17).*  
**TT:** *How then could he forget **the Africa-gin**, drops of which had fallen on his tongue at a time before there was hair on his belly ... (TOMM, 10).*
- ii) **ST:** *Le nuage de poussière ocre qui tachait son pantalon de drill et le paquet de **stock-fish** qu'il portait sous le bras témoignaient qu'il revenait de la ville. (LVNM, 37).*  
**TT:** *The coating of ochre dust that stained his his khaki trousers and the bundle of **stock-fish** he had under his arm showed he was coming back from the town (TOMM, 29).*
- iii) **ST:** **Washman! Washman!** *Appela-t-elle (UVB, 79/87).*  
**TT:** **'Washman, washman,'** *she called (HB, 73/82).*

His translations in this case could be said to have preserved the nature of discourse in the culture of the source texts author. There are, however, two instances in which he translated the word 'washman' by using the standard English word 'laundryman', as can be seen below:

- i) **ST:** *Nous autres **washmen** sommes comme les docteurs, nous touchons tout ce qui répugne à un homme normal ... (UVB, 87).*

**TT:** *We **laundrymen** are like doctors, we touch the things that disgust ordinary men (HB, 81).*

- ii) **ST:** *Toutes celles que j'ai servies ont toujours confié ces choses au **washman** comme s'il n'était pas un homme ... (UVB, 87).*

**TT:** *Everyone I have worked for has handed these things over to the **laundryman** as if he wasn't a man at all ... (HB, 81).*

This case of inconsistency could suggest that while he might have intended to respect the norms of the field, there were moments when other factors influenced him to unconsciously make decisions which were inconsistent with the norms. This underscores the fact that translators are not always consistent in the choices they make during a translation activity, because the causality of translation action is complex in nature (Marais, 2014:44).

### **C) Loan words from foreign languages**

Oyono also uses loan words from foreign languages, predominantly from Latin and Spanish, in *UVB* and *LVNM*. The Latin words are mostly religion-related, and reflect the Cameroonian colonial society, in which the Roman Catholic Church was a dominant religious institution which worked hand-in-hand with the French colonial administration. The natives were thus compelled to learn to say prayers and other religious utterances in Latin, and Oyono uses them both for comic effect and to satirise the religious colonisation of African societies. The use of Spanish words is limited to *UVB*, and it occurs in the part of the story that is set in Spanish Guinea, where Toundi escapes to. In most cases, Reed translated the foreign words by maintaining them in the target texts as can be seen in the following examples:

- i) **ST:** *Le père Vandermayer chanta enfin **Ite missa est** (UVB, 47).*

**TT:** *Father Vandermayer at last sings the **Ite missa est** (HB, 34).*

- ii) **ST:** *Il écarta les mains comme un prêtre disant «**Dominus vobiscum**» (UVB, 72).*

**TT:** *He spread his hands like a priest saying '**Dominus vobiscum**' (HB, 62).*

- iii) **ST:** ***Madre de Dios** ! jura Anton en se signant (UVB, 20).*

**TT:** *'**Madre de Dios,**' said Anton, crossing himself (HB, 2).*

- iv) **ST:** *Mais aussitôt qu'ils nous quittaient, nos amis de rencontre oubliaient leur mine dramatique et nous lançaient un jovial «**Buenas tardes**» (UVB, 20).*

**TT:** *Then as they left us, they suddenly forgot these dramatics and shouted a jovial '**Buenas tardes**' after us (HB, 2).*

- v) **ST:** *Y en a été «**uno alumno**», me dit gravement celui qui l'avait trouvé (UVB, 23).*

**TT:** *The man who found it said gravely, 'He must have been **uno alumno**' (HB, 5).*

It could be said that by maintaining the foreign words in his translations, Reed sought to preserve the hybrid nature of language use in the source texts' community. Just like in the previous category, there are also two instances in which he translated foreign expressions by using the English equivalents as in the following examples:

- i) **ST:** *Il fit encore un signe de croix, récita un «**pater**» et un «**ave**», puis termina en suçant son pouce (LVNM, 135).*

**TT:** *He crossed himself again and said **Our Father** and a **Hail Mary**. Then he sucked his thumb (TOMM, 120).*

- ii) **ST:** *Encore l'un de **ces Françés** ... On annonce qu'un **Françés** est au plus mal et qu'on n'est pas sûr qu'il passera la nuit (UVB, 20).*

**TT:** *'Another **poor Frenchman** ... it says a **Frenchman** is very ill. They do not think he will last the night (HB, 2).*

In the first example, the Latin words for the Lord's Prayer and the prayer to the Holy Mary are translated by using their English equivalents, which makes the meaning clearer. In the second example, the Spanish word for 'Frenchman' is translated using its English equivalent. Oyono's use of the word in the '*Françés*' is to express the ironical situation of Cameroonians under French colonial rule. The French officially made Africans in their colonies to believe that they had become French citizens, while at the same time subjecting them to different forms of abuse and exploitation. It could be argued that Reed's intention to use the English word in his translation was to ensure that target readers did not overlook the irony contained in the source text, which might have been the case if the Spanish word was used.

In conclusion, it could be argued that Reed adopted a translation strategy that recreated the hybrid language formations of Oyono's *UVB* and *LVNM*, which implies that his actions were influenced by the literary field in which he worked. He, however,

showed inconsistency in some of his choices, especially in the translation of some Pidgin English and foreign language terms, thereby highlighting the complexity of the causality of his actions.

### 5.3.2.11 Race-related terms

*UVB* and *LVNM* are portrayures of the ills of French colonial practices in Cameroon and the racial injustices of the system. There are thus words and expressions in the two novels that depict the race relations between blacks and whites in French colonial Cameroon. These terms are considered culture-bound because they are embedded in the specific sociocultural context of their usage. Their full meaning may thus only be grasped through an understanding of their cultural context of usage. Given that race-related discourse is part of a wider ideology on race, the translation of such discourse is bound to have ideological implications. I therefore sought to analyse the strategies that Reed used in translating race-related terms in Oyono's novels, and the implications of the strategies for agency in translation. I focused on terms with racial undertones that refer to places and people as can be seen in the examples below. The source text terms are followed by literal translations (LT) before the target text renditions (TT), so as to give a clear understanding of the translator's strategies in the transfer process:

#### A) Terms referring to places

The terms with racial undertones that refer to places are the names of the different neighbourhoods in which the natives and the whites live. The two most common examples are the terms '*quartier indigène*', also referred to as '*quartier noir*'; and '*la ville des Blancs*', which are used in the instances below:

- i) **ST:** *Chez Mammy Titi qui habitait le quartier indigène, c'était déjà la ville (LVNM, 11).*  
**LT:** *At Mammy Titi's, who lived in **the indigenous neighborhood**, it was already in town.*  
**TT:** *Madam Titi lived in **the African location** and once you reached her place you were already in town (TOMM, 5).*
- ii) **ST:** *Mes hommes fouillent le quartier noir (UVB, 107).*  
**LT:** *My men are searching **the black neighborhood**.*  
**TT:** *My men are searching **the location** ... (HB, 105).*

- iii) **ST:** *Dominant ce dernier, la ville des Blancs, bâtit sur la colline limitrophe, était en vue (LVNM, 12).*
- LT:** *Dominating the latter, **the town of the Whites**, built on the adjacent hill, was in sight.*
- TT:** ***The European town**, built on the adjacent hill came into sight, dominating the location (TOMM, 5).*

The use of these words in the source texts is to portray the discriminatory practices of the French colonial system, which pretended to embrace the Africans, but set up different neighbourhoods for blacks and whites. The words therefore highlight the ideological aspects of the novels, and the translator's actions in this would indicate his association or dissociation with the ideological world view of the author of the source texts (Baker, 2006). The translation of the terms indicates that Reed has preserved the racial undertones expressed in the original texts, thereby giving the target readership the same picture as that of the source texts.

There is, however, a discrepancy between the translations and the sociocultural setting of the source texts, because the target words apply more to the Southern African context than to the Cameroonian context, in which the source texts are set. It is worth stating that while the French colonial system also had discriminatory practices as were witnessed in apartheid South Africa, the separation of living areas in the French colonies was more a practice than an official policy. Words like 'African location' or 'African township' (*HB*, 109) would therefore not be easily understood in the same way in the context of Oyono's colonial Cameroon. Reed revealed in the interview that he spent seventeen years living and working in Southern and Northern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe and Zambia) with regular visits to South Africa, and this could explain why he used terms which were mostly applicable to Southern Africa to translate the terms in question.

Gouanvic (2010) and Wolf (2013) have argued for the need to trace the trajectory of translators in order to understand the actions they take during translation. This implies that the habitus of translators, which is constituted from their social and professional experiences, is a determining factor in translation action. It could thus be argued that Reed's exposure to Southern Africa had endowed him with a habitus that influenced his interpretation of race-related issues in Oyono's novels.

## B) Terms referring to people

Other terms that have racial undertones are the words used to refer to people of different races in Oyono's novels. The most common words used are 'les Blancs', 'les Noirs' and 'les nègres/ négresses'; which are used in the following instances:

- i) **ST:** *Mais ... tu es avec des Blancs ... (UVB, 112).*  
**LT:** *But ... you are with Whites...*  
**TT:** *But ... You're with Europeans ... (HB, 110).*
- ii) **ST:** *Elle voulut suivre les Blancs mais le garde la repoussa (UVB, 113).*  
**LT:** *She wanted to follow the Whites but the guard pushed her back.*  
**TT:** *She tried to follow the Europeans into the house but the constable pushed her back (HB, 111).*

It can be observed that in the translations, Reed chose to neutralise the racial undertones of the original words by opting for the words 'Europeans' and 'Africans', which are less race-specific, and it could be said that this gives his target texts a different message from the source texts, as the target readership is likely to overlook the racial divide that is prevalent in Oyono's source texts world. This implies that Reed rewrote the text in a way that dissociated him from the source text author's ideological position (Baker, 2006). By substituting racially charged words with more neutral ones, the translator made a decision that did not seem to align with the literary field in which racial conflict was a major theme of the literary production.

It could be argued that Reed considered Oyono's racially charged words to be offensive, and he therefore sought to be politically correct by offering the target readers a less insensitive text. While Reed's translations in this case seems to have denied the target readers access to the racial tensions expressed in the source texts, his actions underscore his role as an interested agent during the translation process, who opted to dissociate from the ideological world view of the source text author. While Reed used the neutralising approach in most of the instances in which these words were used, there were, however, a few cases in which '*les Blancs*' was translated as 'the whites', as exemplified below:

- i) **ST:** *Nous étions beaucoup de Noirs à regarder les Blancs s'amuser (UVB, 40).*  
**LT:** *We were many Blacks watching the Whites enjoying themselves.*

**TT:** *There were a fair number of Africans there to watch the whites enjoying themselves (HB, 27).*

This inexplicable inconsistency on the part of the translator once more highlights the fact that translators do not always stick to a uniform pattern of actions during a specific translation process, which implies that the causality of translation action is complex in nature and cannot be explained from a single conceptual angle (Marais, 2014:44).

When it comes to the more racially charged word 'les nègres', Reed again adopted a neutralisation approach as can be seen in the following examples:

- ii) **ST:** *Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille* (title of *LVNM*).  
**LT:** *The Old Negro and the Medal*.  
**TT:** *The Old Man and the Medal* (title of *TOMM*).
- iii) **ST:** *Pauvre France! ... dit encore Gosier-d'Oiseau. Les nègres sont maintenant ministre à Paris!* (*UVB*, 63).  
**LT:** *Poor France ... said Bird's Neck. Negros are now Ministers in Paris!*  
**TT:** *'Poor France', said Gullet. 'Natives are now Ministers in Paris!'* (*HB*, 52).
- iv) **ST:** *Comment aurait-il pu me reconnaître? Pour les Blancs, tous les nègres ont la même gueule* (*UVB*, 41).  
**LT:** *How could he recognize me? Four the Whites, all Negros have the same mouth.*  
**TT:** *How could he recognize me? All Africans look the same to them* (*HB*, 28).
- v) **ST:** *Qu'est-ce que tu veux, nous autres négresses ne comptons pas pour eux* (*UVB* 40).  
**LT:** *What do you want? We Negros do not mean anything to them.*  
**TT:** *Well, what do you expect? We don't mean anything to them* (*HB*, 27).

The first example (i) has to do with the title of *LVNM* in which Reed chose to replace the word 'negro' with 'man'. The title of a cultural work is a source of attraction as it gives the reader an idea of what to expect in the work (Shi, 2014). The original title of *LVNM* clearly gives the signal of a story of race relations, and it could be said that by taking out the word 'negro', Reed eliminates this signal in the translation. While the

source text title may attract anyone interested in race relations, the translation may not, and this would undermine the impact of the author's works as some readers of the target system may not have the same urge to read the novel as they would have done if the title was different.

In examples (ii) and (iii), Reed chose to substitute the word '*Negros*' for 'natives' and 'Africans', respectively. In the last example (v), he chose to omit the race-related word by using the word 'we' instead of 'we *Negros*'. He seems to have adopted these strategies in order to neutralise the racial undertones of the source texts' words without changing the messages. It could, however, be said that the translations present a different ideological world view from that of the source texts. I would argue that in his effort to be politically correct in his use of words, Reed misread Oyono's use of language as being insensitive, and this led him to eliminate the criticism of racism that is inherent in the source text.

In conclusion, in his translations of race-related terms, Reed seems to have been influenced by his social background, or individual habitus, to adopt an approach which enabled him to neutralise the racial undertones of the source texts' discourse.

#### **5.4 Implications for agency in translation studies**

In this section, I intend to demonstrate the implications which the analysis of John Reed's translation of culture-bound terms in *UVB* and *LVNM* have for agency in translation studies. The analysis was done on the basis that the decision-making of the agent -translator at the textual level of a translation is influenced by the habitus of the translator, which is acquired from the literary field, as well as his/her individual habitus, which is acquired prior to his/her entering the field (Sela-Sheffy, 2014; Wolf, 2013). For the sake of clarity, I use the term 'field' to refer to the shared habitus of the literary field, and 'habitus' to refer to the individual habitus of the translator. This is because translators working in the same field do not have the same social background (Sela-Sheffy, 2014), which implies that their actions cannot be the same, given that they are not only regulated by their shared habitus, but also by their specific individual habitus. I therefore used 'field' and 'habitus' as the analytical concepts of the translator's textual level actions, and the effects of those actions on the English translations of *UVB* and *LVNM*.

With regard to the field as a constraining factor of translation action, the analysis revealed that Reed's textual actions were influenced by factors within the African literary field, both at the level of interpreting the source texts and at the transfer level. It is worth mentioning that the translator's decision-making at the textual level operates at the interpretation and transfer phases (Yannakopoulou, 2014). At the interpretation phase, the translator processes the source text message and reconciles himself/herself to the fact that s/he has understood the message as it was intended by the source text author.

It is in this regard that Venuti (2013) has argued that the translator's interpretation of the source text is the first level of the translation process. At the transfer phase, the translator makes the necessary choices to ensure that the target text reader receives and understands the message according to the intention of either the author or the translator himself/herself. This implies that the actions s/he takes at the textual level contribute in constructing social reality (Milton & Bandia, 2009), given that it is through him/her that foreign texts are introduced into the target system (Bourdieu, 2002). This implies that the translator's agency at the textual level operates both at the interpretation and the transfer stages, where the translator's decision-making takes place.

With regard to Reed's reading of Oyono's source texts, it could be argued that his interpretation was predominantly influenced by the habitus which he had acquired in the African literary field. The interpretation of a source text requires a habitus which regulates the way an individual deconstructs and makes sense of things (Hermans, 2007). This implies that for Reed to have the full understanding of the cultural and ideological world view of Oyono's source texts, he had to go through a process of deconstructing the source text message in a way that enabled him to reconcile himself to the fact that the linguistic, cultural, and ideological elements that needed to be transferred had been grasped. He therefore needed to have a habitus that was aligned to the method and style of the African literary field in which he was working.

The long period of time he spent working as a literary academic, critic, and translator of African literature seemingly exposed him to the poetics of African literature and this endowed him with a habitus that enabled him to interpret and understand the source texts messages. It could be argued that this led him to produce translations that were to a large extent a reflection of the source texts. This

does not, however, seem to have been enough for him to have a full grasp of the cultural world view expressed in the source texts, as his European background led him to misinterpret some of the source text messages.

The field was also the main factor which constrained Reed's actions at the transfer level of the translation process. In his own words, he said he intended to give the target text readers the same impression that the source text readers had. This led him to adopting predominantly foreignising strategies as was evidenced in his translations of the culture-bound terms. It could be argued that Reed's decision to opt for foreignising strategies was influenced by the habitus he had acquired from his exposure to the poetics African literature at the time of his translations. African literature in European languages is peculiar in terms of content, form, and purpose, and the translators of this literature need to grasp its peculiarities (Bandia, 2008; Gyasi, 2003).

I would contend that, while Reed's translations show cases of misinterpretation and mistranslations as result of his European background, the period he spent working in the African literary field exposed him to the norms of the African literary field and this did endow with a habitus that led him to adopt strategies that aligned his translations with the prevalent poetics of the African literary field at the time. His actions were thus constrained by the nature of literary productions in the field, as well as the expected reception of the translations in the aforementioned field. This enabled his translations to have a reparatory function in the target system (Bandia, 2008) by preserving the cultural identity of the source texts, and this positioned him as a constructed and constructing agent (Wolf, 2007b) of the African literary field.

There are other textual actions of Reed that could be said to have been influenced by his individual habitus and not by the habitus he had acquired through the incorporation of the norms of the field in his mind and practice (Sela-Sheffy, 2014:43). This implies that even though the field conditioned his actions to follow a certain pattern, there were instances in which his primary habitus interfered with this pattern and influenced him to make a decision that was not aligned with the norms of the literary field in which he worked. This was demonstrated at both the interpretation and transfer levels of the translation process. At the interpretation level, Reed's individual habitus could be said to have influenced his interpretation, or misinterpretation, of certain concepts that made up the cultural world view of the

source texts, such as native words, semantic shifts, language varieties, food items, and race-related terms. This led him to misrepresent the source text expressions in the translations, thereby giving the target text readers a different account of the source text realities. This was particularly evident in his decision to neutralise some of the terms with racial undertones, as well as some invectives, including the cases where some terms were translated using South African-related terms. This implies that his choices in this case were influenced by the primary habitus which he brought with him to the field of African literature in which he was working.

It is in this regard that Tyulenev (2014:6) has argued that translation strategies always bear an imprint of the translator's socialisation, which may be visible or sometimes invisible, to the translators themselves. This implies that the translator's habitus is shaped by both the history of his involvement in a given field of activity as well as his/her individual history, which makes him different from other agents involved in the same practice of the same field (Gouanvic, 2005; Wolf, 2007a). It is in this light that I contend that the causal factors of the translator's agency are never homogeneous, given that the disposition for such agency may be coming from different sources. It is therefore necessary to trace the collective and individual trajectories of translators in order to understand the causality of their actions during translation activities (Gouanvic, 2010).

The analysis of the culture-bound terms in *UVB* and *LVNM* also revealed inconsistencies in Reed's choices, in the sense that he used different target words to translate the same source word. Examples of this could be seen in the cases where he used different sound effects in different instances to translate the same sound, and also when he neutralised some race-related terms in some instances but maintained them in others. These inconsistencies in the translator's decision-making suggest that, in addition to the influence of the field and individual habitus, there may be other external factors influencing the decision-making of a translator. This implies that translation is a complex phenomenon and linear logic is insufficient to explain every action involved (Marais, 2014). It is in this regard that Robinson (2015) has argued that some translation actions are done by intuition rather than calculation, and Chesterman (2007:178) has asserted that the decisions of translators during the translation process are the result of the joint influence of the habitus and other external factors. This implies that the causal factors of the translator's agency are

complex, and translation studies needs to adopt a complexity approach (Marais, 2014:92), in other words, to understand the manifestation of agency in translation activities.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter was to analyse the impact of the translator's agency at the micro-textual level of the translation process. Using Bourdieu's notions of field and habitus, I looked at the manifestation of agency in the strategies that Reed used to transfer Oyono's cultural world view into English, and the impact of his actions on the literary field. I focused on the analysis of culture-bound terms and I did a comparison of the source texts' terms and their English translations. The analysis suggests that Reed's strategies were influenced by the habitus he had acquired in the course of his professional life in the African literary field, as well as his individual habitus, which he brought with him into the field. It was further revealed that in addition to his habitus, other external factors also influenced some of the decisions he made during the translation process, implying that the causal factors of translation agency are complex. The next chapter will provide a general conclusion to the study and make recommendations that can contribute to agency-based research in translation studies.

## CONCLUSION

### 6.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to summarise the key points which have been addressed in the study. The research questions are revisited to see how they have been addressed in the study, and the contributions of the study to research in translation studies have been highlighted. Finally, suggestions are made for the interest of future research.

### 6.2 Synopsis of the study

This study has adopted Bourdieu's theoretical framework to analyse the translations of Ferdinand Oyono's *UVB* and *LVNM*. The study has analysed the social forces that influenced the actions of John Reed at the macro-level and textual level of the English translations of *UVB* and *LVNM*, and how his actions also contributed in shaping the literary field within which he operated. This is because I contend that there is a mutually influential relationship between the actions of translation agents and their fields of operation. In this regard, Bourdieu's theoretical model has enabled me to look at how the literary field constructed, and was constructed, by the agents involved in the translations of Oyono's *UVB* and *LVNM*.

The study starts by situating the sociological approach to translation phenomena within the shifting turns of the field of translation studies. This is done in Chapter 2, which focuses on the review of the conceptual evolution that has characterised the discipline leading to the sociological turn. I have therefore looked at other approaches to the study of translation phenomena and their limitations, which motivated the choice of a sociological approach. I have also explained the choice of Bourdieu's theoretical approach as the appropriate lens through which to understand the dialectic relationship between the actions of translation agents and their field of operation. I have thus explored studies using Bourdieu's theoretical framework to show that this approach is a valid tool with which to study agents' practices in the field of translation studies.

Chapter 3 focuses on the concept of agency in translation studies and explains why Bourdieu's conceptualisation of agency is appropriate for the study of agency in translation phenomena. I have thus looked at the limitations of the way agency has been conceptualised in order to demonstrate how Bourdieu's approach is a valid tool with which to explore the concept in translation studies. The main limitation of other approaches to agency have been identified as being the conceptualisation of agency as the binary conflict between structure and agency, which undermines the way both ends influence each other. It is in this regard that the study has drawn on Bourdieu's approach which looks at agency as the result of the dialectic relationship between the actions of agents and the fields in which they operate. This has enabled me to look at the mutually influential relationship between the literary field in which *UVB* and *LVNM* were translated, and the macro-level and textual level actions of the agents who were involved in the process.

Chapter 4 looks at the context of the production of the English translations of *UVB* and *LVNM*. It therefore analyses the structure of the field in which the two novels were produced, and the role of the translator in constructing the said field. In this regard, the chapter looks at the different positions that structured the literary field, the agents who occupied those positions, and the effect of their interactions on the practices of the field. The chapter starts with a methodological framework adopted for the study, followed by an analysis of the data relating to the macro-level actions of the translator and the publisher. I have thus explained the research design, the data collection instrument, as well the way the data used in the chapter was analysed. The analysis revealed that John Reed's role in the *AWS* as a critic, advisor and translator contributed in constructing the field of African literature in which Oyono's novels were translated, which in turn constrained his actions during the translation of *UVB* and *LVNM*.

Chapter 5 focuses on the analysis of the textual level data of the study. It looks at the translation of culture-bound terms in the two novels through the lenses of Bourdieu's concepts of field and habitus. The chapter starts with a methodological section which explains the methods of collecting and analysing the data involved in the chapter. I therefore explained the concept of culture-bound terms in translation studies, and explain the method used in selecting the categories discussed in the chapter. I also explained why Bourdieu's concept of habitus is a valid tool with which

to study translation action at textual level, because it underscores the way collective and individual norms influence the decisions of translators during the transfer process. The analysis revealed that Reed's actions at the textual level were influenced by a complex combination of the field, his individual habitus, as well as other factors as explained in the chapter.

### **6.3 Research questions revisited**

The aim of the study has been achieved in that the findings have demonstrated that at both the macro-textual and textual levels of the translation of *UVB* and *LVNM* into English, there was a dialectic relationship between the actions of the translation agents and the social context in which they worked. This has been done by addressing the research questions that guided the study in the following manner:

1. *How can Bourdieu's social theory help to explain translation actions in the production of Oyono's Une Vie de Boy and Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille in English?*

Bourdieu's theory provided tools with which to explain social actions. In this study, I have argued that translation is a social phenomenon and the factors underpinning its practice are social in nature. Bourdieu's theory offers the tools with which to understand the dialectic relationship between social agents and the fields in which they operate. It has thus been used in this study to demonstrate that there was a mutually influential relationship between the actions of the agents involved in the translations of *UVB* and *LVNM* and the field in which the works were translated. This has been done through use of Bourdieu's tools of field, capital and habitus, in which it has been explained that the actions of translation agents construct, and are constructed, by the field in which they work.

In this regard, the study has mapped out the positions that made up the structure of the African literary field in which the translations were produced, the agents who occupied the said positions, and how the interactional relationship between the different agents was influential to translation action at both the macro-level and textual level. The findings revealed that the positions that structured the literary field in which the texts under study were translated, were the original works, publishing houses, translated works and target readership, while the agents who occupied the said positions were authors, publishers, translators, and readers, respectively.

2. *What role do literary and cultural aspects play in building up a picture of Ferdinand Oyono's world view?*

Oyono's works fall within the ambit of postcolonial African literature. This literature was heavily influenced by the social, cultural, and political context in which it was produced. Given its nature as a literature of resistance to Western colonisation, culture occupies a central role in its production, as the authors sought to reclaim their cultural identity from the assimilation of the West. It is in this regard that, although the literature was produced in the European languages of their colonisers, the authors ensured that these languages were heavily influenced by their local culture. They therefore resorted to oral traditions and produced texts that portrayed an abundant use of proverbs, fables, puns, metaphors, and other rhetorical devices. This is the nature of Oyono's novels, as they reflect the resistant function of African literature of the time.

3. *What are the strategies the translator uses to represent the cultural world view of the source texts in the target texts, especially as his European background is very remote from the world of the source texts?*

The translator used a predominantly foreignising strategy to translate the works of Ferdinand Oyono into English. This was facilitated by the fact that he had spent many years working in the literary field as a literary educator, critic, and translator, and this had enabled him to acquire the habitus that enabled him to understand, to a great extent, the literary norms of the field. However, the study also revealed that the time spent in the African literary field could not offer the translator a total grasp of the cultural view of the source text author, as there were cases in which some source text messages were misinterpreted, leading to translations that deviated from the source text. This was evidenced in Reed's translation of some native words, semantic shifts, language varieties, food items, and race-related terms.

4. *What are the social factors that influence the choices the translator makes in terms of his strategies and how do they conform to or conflict with relevant theories on the subject?*

The social factors that influenced Reed's translation strategies have been explained through Bourdieu's notions of field and habitus. Reed's adoption of a foreignised approach has been explained as the result of his intention to adhere to the norms of

the African literary field in which he was working. He had acquired these norms through the many years in which he had worked in the field. However, some of Reed's actions have been attributed to his personal habitus which he acquired out of the African literary field. This has been seen in cases in which he neutralised some of the invectives and terms with racial undertones, as well as in cases where some words were translated using South African-related terms. Terms from a different geographical region have been used to translate, as well as in cases where his interpretation of the source texts was influenced by factors out of the field, thereby leading to some instances of the translations deviating from the intentions of the source text author.

#### **6.4 Contributions of the study**

This study contributes to trends in the sociological study of translation phenomena by applying Bourdieu's theoretical framework to the empirical study of translation. As far as could be established, there has been no study that applies Bourdieu's theory to the study of African literature, especially the works of Ferdinand Oyono. It is therefore important to look at the factors that structure the African literary field, the agents involved in the production of literary works and the factors that influence the actions of translation agents.

In this regard this study contributes to the field of translation studies in various ways. First, the study contributes to a broader understanding of the concept of agency in translation studies by shifting the focus of translation agency, from one of agency *versus* structure, to one in which agency and structure share a mutually influential relationship. In this regard, the agents construct the structure, which in turn constrain their actions. Still on the concept of agency, the study also underscores the context-specific nature of agency in translation studies, by demonstrating that the influence of an agent in one context may not apply to another context because the agent's habitus and capital may not have the same recognition in different contexts. The study therefore highlights the need to broaden the frontiers of translation studies in order to unearth different contexts of translation agency, so as to have a comprehensive understanding of the concept.

Furthermore, this study contributes in demonstrating that a combined macro-textual and textual level analysis is necessary for a comprehensive understanding of

the actions of agents involved in translation activities. It underscores the fact that a translation product is not only the result of textual level actions, as there are actions situated at the macro-textual level that have a significant impact on the process and product of translation.

The study equally contributes by demonstrating that Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus, and capital are valid tools for the analysis of translation phenomena in contexts other than European. This contributes in the shift from Eurocentric perspectives on translation studies to approaches that incorporate experiences from different parts of the world.

In addition, the study contributes in validating the application of Bourdieu's social theory to the study of social phenomena. This has been done by looking at translation as a social practice and explaining the actions of the agents involved and how those actions relate to the social context in which the agents operate.

The study also contributes in focusing the study of translation activities on the social agents involved in the process, instead of the systemic factors that constrain the actions. Until recently, translation studies have focused on the textual processes or the systemic factors that influence those processes, with little attention being paid to the role of the social agents in the process. This study therefore contributes in research that focuses on the role of the human agents involved in translation phenomena.

Another significance of the study is that it contributes to the translation of African literature by looking at the context of the translators involved. Much has been written on the context of the authors of original literary works, but little has been said about the contexts of the translators who contribute in disseminating these works to foreign audiences.

The study also contributes to an understanding of the diversified nature of the habitus as a causal factor of social action. Unlike many studies which tend to look at the habitus of an agent as a homogeneous mechanism of perception and action, the study demonstrates that different stages of an agent's historical experiences endowed him/her with a particular habitus, which leads to the agent's habitus being made up of different aspects, which can each influence the agent's actions differently in different situations.

## 6.5 Suggestions for future research

Given that there are limitations to what this study has been able to cover, future research could apply the sociological approach to other areas of translation studies. In this regard, while the study has applied Bourdieu's sociological theory to the study of the translation of the novels of Ferdinand Oyono, it would be beneficial for further research to apply the same model to study other genres of translation. The Bourdieusian approach can, for example, be applied to the study of theatre or poetry translation in Africa, to discover the social contexts in which they are produced, and the role of the human agents involved in the production thereof.

Furthermore, this study applied a sociological approach to the study of the translation of African literature, with specific focus to Bourdieu's sociological approach. It would, however, be beneficial to apply other sociological models, such as Bruno Latour's actor-network theory, Niklas Luhmann's systems theory, or Anthony Giddens' structuration theory, to the study of literary translation in Africa. Such studies may reveal new information on other ways in which social factors could influence the actions of translation agents.

The study has looked at the context of translations that were done in the 1960s. It would be necessary for research to apply Bourdieu's model to the study of more recent translations of African literature to explore the factors that structure the current field and the actions of the social agents involved in translation activities in recent years. Also, the study has looked at the translations of John Reed and how his habitus influenced his actions in the translation process. It would be necessary for translation studies to look at the trajectories of other translators of African literature to see how different trajectories could have influenced the actions of the translators involved in the translation of African literature. In addition to translators, it would also be beneficial for research to look at trajectories of other human agents involved in African literature, such as the authors and publishers, to discover how their habitus constrained their actions and this may impact on the translations of works they produce.

Worth mentioning, is the fact that the findings of the study have revealed that factors other than the field and habitus could have influenced some of the actions of the translator at the textual level. It would therefore be beneficial for translation

studies to adopt a more complex approach to the study of agency so as to unearth the different factors that come into play during the translation process.

Finally, the study has focused on the translation of African literature between European languages. It would be necessary for other studies to apply the sociological approach to the study of literary translation involving an African and a non-African language. This is likely to reveal new information on the social factors underpinning the phenomenon, as well as the role of the agents involved in the activity.

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*Appendix A*

**EMAIL INTERVIEW WITH JAMES CURREY AND KEITH SAMBROOK**

**Email interview with James Currey**

Felix Awung <awungfelix@yahoo.fr>

jmitchell@boydell.co.uk ltaylor@boydell.co.uk

08/21/12 3:29 PM

I am a PhD student and my research is on francophone African literature translated into English and published in the African Writers Series. The research involves talking to the actors concerned, who in my case are John Reed and James Currey.

I would therefore be grateful if you could give me James Currey's email address for the said purpose.

Regards,

Felix

---

Lynn Taylor <LTaylor@boydell.co.uk>

Felix Awung Jaqueline Mitchell

08/21/12 3:59 PM

Dear Felix Awung

I will forward your details to James Currey.

with regards

Lynn Taylor, Managing Editor & Commissioning Literature, Theatre & Film

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James Currey <jamescurrey7@btinternet.com>

[awungfelix@yahoo.fr](mailto:awungfelix@yahoo.fr)

08/23/12 à 11:24 AM

Dear Felix Awung

I should be pleased to talk to you about the subject. Are you in France at the moment? You could interview me by telephone from there.

Are you planning to visit Oxford? You are welcome to interview me if you do.

Or would you hope to interview me by email?

Are you in touch with John Reed and Clive Wake? I can forward emails to them if helpful.

Do you know Ruth Bush who is doing work on a doctorate at Oxford on translation of Francophone novels?

With good wishes

James Currey

---

[Felix Awung <awungfelix@yahoo.fr>](mailto:awungfelix@yahoo.fr)

[James Currey](#)

08/24/12 à 12:15 PM

Dear Mr Currey,

I am indeed very delighted to get in touch with you. I am actually based in Lesotho and doing my doctoral research at the University of the Free State in South Africa. My topic is "Representing Africa through Translation: Ferdinand Oyono's *Une Vie de Boy* and *Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille* in English". The framework is on agency, that's why I need the agents involved (especially the translator and publisher) to tell their side of the story. I am already in touch with John Reed and have conducted two email interviews with him. Your name emerges from the interview and I have also been reading on you. I have read your interview with Nourdin Bejjit, which is very rich in information, but would like to ask you a few questions myself. This has to be by email due to my situation of residence.

While I prepare the questions, I would like to thank you once more for accepting my request.

Kindest regards.

Felix

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[Felix Awung <awungfelix@yahoo.fr>](mailto:awungfelix@yahoo.fr)

James Currey

08/25/13 11:11 AM

Dear James,

I hope you are fine. Last year I wrote to ask if I could interview you in relation to your involvement in the publication of African Francophone writers (especially Ferdinand Oyono). Sorry for having been silent since then, which was due to the fact that I suspended my research because I was relocating to South Africa and needed time to settle down. I have now resumed the research and would like to know if you are still willing to let me interview you.

I am also trying to lay hands on the book *Africa Writes Back: The African Writers Series and the launch of African Literature*, which I am sure will give me more information on the role of the ARS in what I am doing. Please confirm that you are willing to address my questions before I forward them to you.

Kindest regards,

Felix

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[James Currey <jamescurrey7@btinternet.com>](mailto:jamescurrey7@btinternet.com)

Felix Awung

08/27/13 à 7:48 PM

Dear Felix Awung

It is very important news that you interviewed Professor John Reed before his death.

I shall be glad to answer your questions if you email them to me.

AFRICA WRITES BACK; THE AFRICAN WRITERS SERIES AND THE LAUNCH OF THE AFRICAN WRITERS SERIES is easily available in South Africa as it was co-

published by Wits University Press (ISBN 978-1-86814-472-3). Pages 59 to 71 are about Francophone writers. I had a great deal of interchange with Beti and Sembene but, I am afraid, very little direct contact with Oyono. But give me the questions and I'll do my best.

Yours

James Currey

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Felix Awung <awungfelix@yahoo.fr>

James Currey

03/02/14 12:01 PM

Dear James,

This is a follow-up to my request to interview by email on the publication of Ferdinand Oyono's works in English. I do not know whether some of the questions would be better addressed by Keith Sambrook, who you say commissioned the translations; but if that is the case, I would be glad if you could forward them to him, or kindly give me his email address.

While thanking you for accepting to answer my questions, accept my kindest regards.

Felix

**Questions on John Reed's translations of Oyono's *HouseBoy* and *the Old Man and the Medal***

1. How and why did you become involved in African literature?
2. How did the AWS come about, and what were the main reasons behind its coming into existence?
3. Where there guiding principles in place to determine the types of literature to be accepted for publication in the AWS?
4. Which types of texts were targeted in the publications of the AWS?
5. Which specific readership was the target of the AWS?
6. To what extent were works of the AWS accepted in the European literary mainstream?
7. What policy guided the publication of translated works in the AWS?

8. Which types of literary works were considered suitable for translation under the ARS?
  9. Who decided on the translators to translate the works, and was there a criteria for choosing the translators?
  10. What motivated your decision to have an English translation of Ferdinand Oyono's novels?
  11. Which kind of negotiations took place between AWS and the John Reed before, during and after the translation?
  12. Were there any negotiations between Julliard and Oyono himself in view of translating the novels?
  13. Was the John Reed given any briefs or guidelines to follow during the translation process?
  14. How was the quality of the translation assessed before publication?
  15. How was the reception of the English translation of the novels when they were published?
- 

**Dear Felix Awung**

Please use AWS for the African Writers Series (not ARS)

Questions 1-5 Please get answers from AFRICA WRITES BACK (Wits UP) I have written extensively

I have talked through questions 6 to 15 with Keith Sambrook

**Questions on John Reed's translations of Oyono's *HouseBoy* and *the Old Man and the Medal***

16. How and why did you become involved in African literature?
17. How did the AWS come about, and what were the main reasons behind its coming into existence?
18. Where there guiding principles in place to determine the types of literature to be accepted for publication in the AWS?
19. Which types of texts were targeted in the publications of the AWS?
20. Which specific readership was the target of the AWS?
21. To what extent were works of the AWS accepted in the European literary mainstream?

22. What policy guided the publication of translated works in the AWS? Clive Wake and John Reed told Keith Sambrook about remarkable books already published by general publishers in France (As Caribbean writers were being published in London in fifties)
23. Which types of literary works were considered suitable for translation under the AWS? Novels in particular. Poetry as well
24. Who decided on the translators to translate the works, and was there a criteria for choosing the translators? Reed and Wake advised. As did Abiola Irele and Gerald Moore. The criterion was that the book should read smoothly in English.
25. What motivated your decision to have an English translation of Ferdinand Oyono's novels?

THEY WERE SOUTSTANDING COMPARED WITH ENGLISH FICTION PUBLISHED IN BRITAIN AND AMERICA. And funny. And socially sharp

26. Which kind of negotiations took place between AWS and the John Reed before, during and after the translation? Reed translated Vie de Boy on his own initiative. That was so good that Keith Sambrook agreed he should translate Le Vieux Negre.
27. Were there any negotiations between Julliard and Oyono himself in view of translating the novels? I think not. They probably just were pleased to tell him that the rights were sold to a well-established London publisher. Authors can ask to see the translation but rarely do.
28. Was the John Reed given any briefs or guidelines to follow during the translation process? No. See answer to question 11
29. How was the quality of the translation assessed before publication? We knew that John Reed was closely advised by Clive Wake. Keith Sambrook judged that the translation flowed and was easily readable in English (He could read the French). Aig Higo in Nigeria was overwhelmed by reading the book.
30. How was the reception of the English translation of the novels when they were published? Excellent reviews in leading journals. Good sales to public libraries Before long reading list adoption in Universities in Britain, the Commonwealth and America. SURPRISING IN VIEW OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BOY AND THE MADAM THAT IT WAS NOT BANNED IN SA.

Felix Awung <awungfelix@yahoo.fr>

James Currey

03/09/14 11:21 AM

Dear james,

Many thanks for your answers and please do also extend my appreciation to Keith Sambrook.

Regards.

Felix

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*Appendix B*

**EMAIL INTERVIEW WITH JOHN REED**

Felix Awung <awungfelix@yahoo.fr>

johnreedjo@aol.com Johnreedjo@aol.com

01/06/11 à 10:39 AM

Dear Sir,

I got your address from Prof. Chris Dunton. I am doing a PhD research on your translation of *Une Vie de Boy* and *Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille*. The focus of my study is on the context within which the two novels were translated, and my data collection involves interviewing the translator and the publisher. I would therefore be grateful if you accept to allow me to interview you. I would also like to know if after the first series of questions, you would be available for any further questions or clarification that I might need.

Kindest regards.

Felix Awung

---

Johnreedjo@aol.com

awungfelix@yahoo.fr

01/06/11 7:27 PM

Dear Felix

I am glad we are in touch at last. I heard from Chris Dunton you would like to ask me some questions about my Oyono translations last year. I will need a day or two to see what records I have relating to the contract with Heinemann and the African Writers Series. I dealt with James Currey, who as you will know is still active in publishing and has written a book about the founding of AWS. I will then try to answer as fully as I can the questions you will ask. Of course I will be happy to make myself available for further discussion.

With best wishes for your work,

John Reed

[Felix Awung <awungfelix@yahoo.fr>](mailto:awungfelix@yahoo.fr)

[Johnreedjo@aol.com](mailto:Johnreedjo@aol.com)

01/11/11 8:37 AM

Sir,

I am very grateful at your reply and eager to have your input.

My questions are as follows:

- Who made the decision for you to translate the works?
- What role did the author and the publishers (of the original and the translations) play in your translation of the works?
- For which audience were the works translated?
- What did you do to understand the world view of the source texts?
- What determined the translation strategies you used or choices you made in the process of your translation, especially in relation to culture-specific concepts?

May you have a wonderful New Year.

Felix

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01/13/11 7:10 PM

Dear Felix

Thank you for your New Year Greetings, which I return. I hope your work goes well in the new year.

Before I try to answer your questions, I should mention that just before I completed my contract at the University of Zambia to return to England, in 1974, I made a folder of all my correspondence with Heinemann Education Books and OUP and between Clive Wake and myself that dealt with African writing, and left these as a manuscript collection in the University of Zambia Library. I thought that if in the future there was scholarly interest in the early publication of African literature in English, it would most likely be from within Africa and in this I seem to have been right. I mention this because in most cases I do not have the actual letters to which I refer, and am dependent on entries made in my diary. Whether this collection would still be available in the University of Zambia Library I do not know.

Who made the decision for you to translate the works?

On 18th October 1963 while I was in London, on study leave from my post in the English Department of the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, I received a letter from Keith Sambrook of Heinemann Educational Books. The letter contained the contract for a Book of African Verse which Clive Wake and myself had edited. In the letter, I was asked who had made the translations of the passages from Oyono which I had quoted in an article I had recently published in the Makerere Journal 7 (pp1-14) Between Two Worlds: Some notes on the presentation by African novelists of the individual in modern society. I replied that I had made the translations myself for the article. I was then asked to write two reports, one on each of the two novels, which HEB could use to base a decision about their suitability for inclusion in the African Writers Series. On the 7th January 1964 I had lunch with Keith Sambrook, at which he asked me if I would be interested in translating one of the novels, and I agreed. This was formally settled at a lunch on 24 April shortly before I returned to Africa. It was agreed I should start with *Une Vie de Boy* and try to have a translation ready by the beginning of September. He mentioned a fee of £100 and I think it was £100 I was eventually paid. Back at the University I began to work on the translation on 2nd June

What role did the author and publishers play?

I had myself no communication with the French publishers nor with Oyono himself. What I have written above gives an idea of the role of Heinemann Educational Books, with whom I was already working with Clive Wake in compiling *A Book of African Verse* for them.

For which audience?

For each novel, a hard back edition was published by the main firm, William Heinemann, either shortly before or simultaneously with the paperback edition in the African Writers' Series. The hardback edition would have been added to the Heinemann Novels list and had a sale to the circulating libraries. But the main point of the publication was the AWS volume and the sales of this series were dominantly in Africa.

What did you do to understand the world view of the source text?

At the time I did not think of the translation at all in these terms. I felt I could produce an English version of the text that would give its reader an experience corresponding to that of a francophone reader of Oyono's original. Any successful reading of a novel must I think involve a grasp of its author's world view. I had read in my life a good many novels in English and French and had recently read all the novels I could lay my hands on written by Africans in the two languages I could read, (as well as much other writing, poetry obviously but also memoirs and autobiographical writings, journalism). As for the colonial situation in the novels, I had lived in Southern Rhodesia since 1957, a society deeply divided, socially and legally, on racial grounds. In the first long vacation of my teaching at the University of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, December to March I had travelled to Nigeria and stayed with my brother and sister in law, both then teachers in Nigerian Secondary Schools (Ado Ekiti), shortly before full Nigerian Independence. I had travelled out to Rhodesia by sea to Cape Town and up by rail to Salisbury so I had at least visited Apartheid South Africa. I had not at the time I made the translation myself employed an African house servant, but living as a stall member in a student residence on campus I had plenty of opportunity to observe white management of for example kitchen staff.

What determined the translation strategies I used.

It seemed to me the French Colonial System in the novels closely resembled the British colonial system, the language of which I some experience of. I was aware of the great climatic and seasonal differences between West and Southern Africa, and my greater familiarity with the southern African climate may in places have made my translation misleading.

I left French colonial titles alone and did not attempt to render them into their approximate British equivalents. (I regret however not respelling Toundi as Tundi as English speakers are likely to pronounce Toundi as if the first syllable rhymed with sound or ground)

At this distance in time I do not recall any difficulties with culture specific concepts but perhaps you could draw my attention to any inappropriate renderings you have noticed.

Please do not hesitate to to ask more detailed questions or ask me to elaborate any of the above.

With best wishes,

John Reed

Felix Awung <awungfelix@yahoo.fr>

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01/17/11 8:23 AM

Sir,

Thanks a lot for the very resourceful information. Your answers will fill many gaps that had been left hanging in my research. Of course, I shall come back to you with more questions and further clarifications, and I thank you for your availability.

Kindest regards,

Felix

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Felix Awung <awungfelix@yahoo.fr>

Johnreedjo@aol.com

10/03/11 10:59 AM

Dear John,

I hope you are well. I am writing as a follow up to the interview on your translation of Ferdinand Oyono's works. I have the following additional questions to which I would like to have your answers:

- What brought you to translation? I.e. why and when did you start to translate?
- Are there other works you have translated (novels, poetry etc)?
- Have you translated in any other language combination apart from French into English?
- What motivated your interest in African literature? Do you have a special affinity with Africa/Cameroon?
- How did you translate Oyono ? E.g. did you read the whole book, study the book, read books about the book; did you rework it many times, let someone read the translation? What were the constraints?
- What attracted you to the works of Oyono in the first place?
- In your translations of Oyono, what were your views on cultural difference?
- Did the norms of the receiving culture influence your translation strategies?

- What purpose guided the course of the translations? Did you have any personal interest in the message you wanted to pass across?
- Did some words/passages pose difficulties in the translations? What do you do when stuck for a word or reference? Which passages did you rework most?
- Did the publishers put you under a lot of pressure?
- How did the editing process with Heinemann go? Did you produce many drafts?
- What about critics? Were their comments useful?
- How did you feel when you received the published works?
- What happens after publication? Is it the end?

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À : [awungfelix@yahoo.fr](mailto:awungfelix@yahoo.fr)

Envoyé le : Mercredi 5 octobre 2011 12h03

Objet : Some Answers on Oyono

Dear Felix

Here are the answers to your questions in as far as I can give them without looking up documents and records or going through the text of the translations. I am off for three weeks holiday tomorrow, but do come back if you wish for clarifications later on.

Apart from school exercises, I suppose French into English translation for me took off in the work I did with my colleague, Clive Wake, at the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland on the study of African literature in the two languages, which led to our being commissioned by Mr James Currey, who was then a publisher at Heinemann Educational Books and starting up the African Writers Series, to submit an anthology of African poetry, which would include francophone poets translated into English. This was A Book of African Verse which came out in 1964. In the same year Oxford University Press brought out Leopold Sedar Senghor, Selected Poems, translated and introduced by Wake and myself. There have been a number of other books by us of translations from Senghor, In the African Writers Series we also did French African Verse, which gives the poems in the original French with our

English translations 'en face' (1972) and a volume of selections from the Malgasy poet, Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo (Translations from the Night, 1975)

By this time our cooperation was at a distance, as Clive Wake was teaching at the University of Kent, and I was at the University of Zambia. We also cooperated as translators of two novels, Mongo Beti's *L'Habitude de Malheure*, and Willims Sassine's *Wirriyamu*, both in the AWS.

I have made translations into English verse of Bertold Brecht's *Hauspostille*, and of the Latin poem, *De Rerum Natura* by Lucretius, but neither of these have been published.

My interest in African literature arose I suppose from seventeen years of teaching English in Africa from 1957 until 1974, first in Rhodesia and then in Zambia.

I had of course read *Une Vie de Boy* and I think I wrote about it and other African novels in an article. As I remember I was asked if I was interested in doing a translation for the AWS by James Currey, and if I was to submit a specimen of a few pages. I was contracted then to produce a complete translation, and I set about it, handwriting an English version, page by page. I doubt if there was criticism about Oyono for me to read, certainly I did not read any. I was still in Rhodesia and I suppose I consulted Clive Wake on points of French language. I don't remember asking anyone to read the whole novel in my translation before I sent it to the publishers. I saw Oyono's novels as well written and telling stories against colonialism which I found all around me in Rhodesia. Of course there were differences, since Rhodesia had a white settler population which ruled the country, though it was still technically a colony of Britain. I do not think I found a cultural problem in translating from French into English since these two languages functioned similarly if not identically in the two colonial systems. In both Oyono's novels the source of comedy are the misunderstandings between masters and servants, something which has been a staple in both French and English literature and goes back at least as far as Roman Comedy.

I found some difficulty in translating the vocabularies referring to patterns of seasonal change in West as distinct from Southern Africa, and I have in places I am told have used English terms current in Southern Africa but which would not be readily understood in English speaking West Africa. My brother was teaching at this time in

Nigeria and I had stayed with him so I had some familiarity with the terminology for West African climate conditions.

I don't now recall any passages which gave me difficulty but I might be reminded if reread my translation.

I produced a typescript of my translation and sent it to London within the deadline. I assume it underwent some sort of editing by the publishers as all books do. I think for translations this editing is for grammar and readability, not for accuracy to the original. I have sometimes while reading a book in French consulted the published English translation and found that the passage I was interested in has just been left out.

For a translation you are paid a lump sum. As I remember I got £100 for Houseboy and £150 for The Old Man and the Medal. Royalties on sales, very properly go to the author. On the other hand the translator's name is printed in every copy sold and the translation of Houseboy has had long print runs both in the UK and in America.

Do come back for further clarifications, though as I say I will be away for the next three weeks,

With all good wishes for your work

John Reed