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The Politics of Translating Sound Motifs in African Fiction

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Acknowledgements and bionote

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Laurence Jay-Rayon Ibrahim Aibo holds an M.A. in Translation and a Ph.D. in Translation Studies from Université de Montréal and currently teaches translation and interpreting online at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. She is a reviewer for international translation studies journals and is the Director of the Colony in Crisis in Haitian Creole Translation Project funded by the New Jersey Council for the Humanities. She has been translating, teaching, and interpreting in the Americas, Europe, and Africa for the past 30 years. This book is the result of an independent project as a translation studies scholar.

Introduction

The title of this book pays homage to Spivak's influential essay originally published in 1993, "The Politics of Translation". In her analysis of translations of female writers from India, Spivak urges translation studies scholars operating in a postcolonial context to reflect on "the role played by language for the *agent*, the person who acts" (2000: 397).[1] A number of translation studies scholars (e.g., Spivak 1993, Cronin 2005, Bandia 2008, Lavoie 2002, Baer 2010, Merrill 2010, and Huang 2010) insist that the aesthetic choices of translators reflect their ideological stances. In this research monograph macro- and micro-decisions made by the translators of literary texts by African authors who carefully craft their poetics are analyzed to identify the overarching politics of translation of individual translators. This analysis involves taking an in-depth look at how the poetic signatures of African writers have been interpreted and represented, either downplayed or bolstered, in translation.

More specifically, the present study draws on the analysis of selected literary works by African writers of English or French expression and their translations into French or English, respectively. It focuses on six African writers from four different literary cultures (Somali, Akan, Shona, and Arabic): Nuruddin Farah from Somalia, Abdourahman Ali Waberi from Djibouti, Jean-Marie Adiaffi from Côte d'Ivoire, Ayi Kwei Armah from Ghana, Chenjerai Hove from Zimbabwe, and Assia Djebar from Algeria. After introducing each of the writers' native literary heritage and analyzing how sound patternings serve as a guiding principle of each of these literatures, the central chapters focus on case studies to establish that these poetic techniques underlie the literary power of these texts. The strategies translators use to address the sound patterns are then examined using statistical analysis and contextualized observations within the larger framework of postcolonial literatures. This close reading reveals highly dissimilar attitudes among translators, who range from marginally to highly committed to the sound motifs of the texts. The discussion provides a rich ground for challenging the traditional divide between oral and written literatures and its correlates within the current critical debate on postcolonial translation.

The last chapter discusses how these particular texts and their translations relate to digital literary practices. Developing digital literary forms, such as audiobooks,

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1. I used the reprint in Venuti's *Translation Studies Reader* (Spivak 2000).

emphasize sound motifs and share affinities with the African oral literary traditions that have nurtured all the writers examined in this study.

The first chapter sets the scene for the study by examining previous research on Europhone African literatures *as* translation and *in* translation. I establish the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the book and demonstrate their relevance to the debate on the translation of African literatures. Critics agree that African literatures have long been regarded and examined primarily for their documentary value, and some critics have insisted on the importance of the oral dimension of African literatures and the impact of this dimension on the translation of these literary works. Apart from Kouadio, who analyzed Francophone literatures from Côte d'Ivoire (2005), and Smith (1993, 2001), who applied this paradigm to her English translation of Yoruba writer D. O. Fagunwa, surprisingly few scholars have engaged with the aural aesthetics of these literatures. The discussion establishes that specific codes that rule individual oral literatures also inform the aural poetics that characterize a number of African texts. For the purpose of the study, "sound motifs" are defined as a terminology drawing on motivation, iteration, and frequency.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 present case studies. The context framing each text and its translation are articulated before excerpts from the corpus are analyzed using a close reading approach. Chapter 2 focuses on the texts of two authors of Somali background, their translations, and translators: *Secrets* (1998) by Nuruddin Farah and its French translation by Jacqueline Bardolph, *Secrets* (1999), alongside *Le Pays sans ombre* (1994) by Abdourahman Ali Waberi and its English translation by Jeanne Garane, *The Land without Shadows* (2005). The examination of these first two translations provides an ideal introduction to the other case studies. Even though both writers reenact traditional Somali alliterative practices in their texts, their respective translators responded very differently to the challenge of translating these alliterations and other sound patterns. Bardolph underplayed Farah's sound motifs altogether whereas Garane made a point of carefully reinscribing Waberi's alliterations in her own translation and documenting them in her introduction. Because several of Waberi's short stories included in *Le Pays sans ombre* had been previously translated by different translators and individually published in various journals, these earlier translations offer me an opportunity to discuss an even wider range of translators' attitudes toward sound motifs.

Chapter 3 addresses the aesthetics of repetition as it characterizes Jean-Marie Adiaffi's *La carte d'identité* (1980) and Chenjerai Hove's *Ancestors* (1996). It examines how Brigitte Katiyo's English translation (*The Identity Card* 1983) and Jean-Pierre Richard's French translation (*Ancêtres* 2002) engage with the iterative devices of the source texts. I situate each source text with respect to Akan and Shona oral literatures and other pertinent literary movements that had currency during the period under consideration. Adiaffi, who claimed his writing as a *n'zassa*

practice (Akan word for patchwork) reminiscent of Caribbean *métissage*, is examined within the framework of Negritude and surrealism. Unlike the previous two translators examined in Chapter 2 – both postcolonial literature scholars who published their translations in the same time period – Richard and Katiyo have different backgrounds. Whereas very little is known about Katiyo's background, Richard is both a prolific literary translator with a track record of translating Southern African literature and a translation studies scholar who has rigorously been documenting his practice as a translator. In addition, these two translators published their translations nearly 20 years apart. This allows me to highlight the diachronic evolution of the critical discourse on African literatures and what this implies in a translation studies perspective.

Chapter 4 contrasts the implementation of sound motifs in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) and their ideological staging in Assia Djebar's *L'Amour, la fantasia* (1985). Sound motifs structure Armah's narration and enact the violence and corruption that erupted in the aftermath of Ghana's independence that Armah portrays in his novel. I establish that Armah's aural aesthetics, which he never commented upon, was thoroughly ignored by critics at the time *The Beautyful Ones* was published. In contrast, Djebar abundantly discussed her own use of sound motifs in *L'Amour, la fantasia*, especially alliterations, as a symbol representing the aesthetic codes of Arabic literature. In light of these divergent contexts, I discuss the stylistic choices of Armah's and Djebar's translators: Josette and Robert Mane (*L'Age d'or n'est pas pour demain* 1976) and Dorothy Blair (*Fantasia, an Algerian Cavalcade* 1993). For instance, Blair implemented alliterations to a higher degree than Djebar herself. This difference is a prime example of the extent to which the critical discourse framing a specific text determines a translator's practice.

Chapter 5 synthesizes the six translation projects and the methodology that was implemented for their examination. Factors that are key in evaluating these specific translation projects are described: the level of recognition of the writer's literary heritage, the critics' polarizing labeling of the text as either "poetic" or "political," and the translator's own profile (as suggested by Berman 1995). Although melopoetic aesthetics is *not* confined to these particular texts, their value is critical to these texts because it specifically points to well-defined, yet largely obliterated, literary heritages ruled by poetic codes. I argue that the decision as to whether or not to translate melopoetic aesthetics needs to be framed according to Spivak's politics of translation (2000). At the end of Chapter 5, I suggest the paradigm of intermedial translation as a tool for negotiating a plurality of literary modalities: such a framework allows us to consider the aural potential of all written texts, regardless of their generic labeling. I contend that this paradigm is particularly relevant in today's publishing context, which shows a rapid progression of audiobooks and digital publishing, including of translated texts. This renewal of "aural literature" – texts

calling upon the listening capacity of an audience – is an avenue worthy of further exploration by translation studies scholars who focus on literatures informed by oral literary practices.

CHAPTER 1

Premise and contexts

1. The divided landscape in the criticism of African literatures

Writing about African literatures and their representation in translation is intrinsically ambiguous. Booker (1998: 4) warns us about the temptation to either exoticize these literatures or read them through the lens of universalism. However, this dichotomy between exoticism and universalism is merely one of many unhelpful oppositions that need to be transcended for a fruitful conversation to happen. Indeed, die-hard binary qualifiers such as Eastern/Western, prose/poetry, content/form, oral/written literature are particularly pointless when it comes to these literatures since the very concept of hybridity requires us to move away from dichotomies.

While most scholars agree on the central role hybridity plays in postcolonial theory, there is no consensus about how to embrace this quality in translation. Bandia (2008) and Sévry (1998: 136) point to the risks of domesticating the text – thus erasing its singularity – or transforming it into an ethnographic artifact. The division among scholars of African literatures further complicates the ability of translators to resist these two extremes. On the one hand, proponents of a traditionalist vision of an African literature whose formal strategies and rhetorical conventions are strongly influenced by the author's oral heritage insist on the alterity of these texts (see, for instance, Chinweizu, Jemie, and Madubuike 1980, Okpewho 1992a and 1992b, Irele 2001a and 2001b). On the other hand, another group of scholars fiercely oppose this vision, which they consider essentialist and backward, just another tool made up by Western critics to belittle African literatures (see, for instance, Soyinka 2009, Ricard 2009, Mudimbe 1988).

A third group of more moderate scholars point out the risks of lending too much importance to orality, which might merely represent yet another scholarly fad or theoretical artifact (Semujanga 2001, Mouralis 1993, Ndiaye 2001). Ndiaye suggests more cautiously that literary critics are still unsure about how to capture the various modalities of the complex and shifting construct that orality represents (2001: 61). Scholars in this third group opt for a more pragmatic and nuanced definition of orality that does not leave any room for an essentialist interpretation.

For the purpose of this book, and building upon Ndiaye's invitation to caution regarding the complexity and shifting nature of orality as a construct, I will in a later section give a working definition of "orality" as encompassing the aural in the context of African literatures.

2. The relevance and limitations of postcolonial theory

Postcolonial writing has been defined as a form of translation, metaphorically speaking, insofar as the writer's native language(s) and culture act as a palimpsest. Postcolonial scholars and writers alike have consistently pointed out that postcolonial writers insist upon their status as translators (Ojo 1986, Ashcroft *et al.* 1989, Rushdie 1992, Sévry 1998, Tymoczko 2002). Tymoczko remarks that linguistic and cultural representation and transposition are integral to both postcolonial writing and translation:

> At the same time, the two types of texts [postcolonial writing and translation] can show radical selectivity of their source material, a selectivity that generally has political or ideological motivation, as well as ideological consequences for the author/translator. (2002: 149)

In keeping with the same metaphor, translators of postcolonial texts are faced with a double layer of translation because their object contains a dual, sometimes multiple, system of representation. Translators must therefore determine what the text they are translating presents to them *in translation*, i.e. "concealed." The ideological implications of selectivity that Tymoczko raises point to the additional responsibilities of the translators of postcolonial works, as well as their heightened sense of ethics.

It should be noted that postcolonial translation scholars generally examine translators' decisions within the larger framework of power dynamics. Micro-decisions, such as ones concerned with form and aesthetics, are less likely to be interpreted in terms of their underlying ideological implications. In fact, Buzelin observed that the specific challenges of translating (in the literal sense of the word) these literary texts have barely been analyzed (2006: 91).

While the objective of postcolonial scholarship is to destabilize the claim to universalism and the dominant hegemonic order of the West, some African intellectuals are suspicious of its framework, which they view as yet another Western theoretical construct (Anyinefa 2000). Postmodernism and poststructuralism are just as likely to provide an adequate framework for analyzing African literatures as postcolonialism (Gikandi 2009, Anyinefa 2000); both literary theories celebrate hybridity and thus constitute appropriate lenses for examining African cultural production (Anyinefa 2000). A postmodernist reading enables us to better analyze the various formal experimentations that undergird African literatures. For example, using a postmodernist framework – one that transcends generic categories and places subversion and transgression at its core – allows us to align formal innovations such as Kourouma's with those of the *nouveau roman*. Regardless of the theory we select to account for the specific literary work being studied:

> [T]o close oneself to ideas and theories because they emerged under alien skies is not only intellectually irresponsible, but can lead to serious problems; for example, to silencing any cultural production suspected to have come under the influence of such ideas. (Anyinefa 2000: 9)

This specific case of anxiety of influence, as Gikandi qualifies it (2009: 616), occasionally fails to explicitly acknowledge that postcolonial theory is informed by poststructuralist thinkers. For instance, Foucault's equation of *savoir-pouvoir* was subsequently borrowed by Said, and Derrida's deconstructionist paradigm is at the core of both Bhabha's and Spivak's own propositions.

These preliminary remarks illustrate the limits of calling upon one particular theoretical framework to the exclusion of others. What is more, postcolonial theory alone has proved insufficient to account for the complexity associated with the translation of specific works of African literatures. What is at stake in this study requires to examine more specifically the ideological components of postcolonial theory in terms of formal aesthetics, drawing on Spivak's claim that translating the stylistic experiments of postcolonial writers amounts to recognizing their identity: "without a sense of the rhetoricity of language, a species of neocolonialist construction of the non-western scene is afoot" (Spivak 2000: 399). Cronin develops this claim further when he insists on considering the larger context in which translations are produced:

> Translations [are] no longer to be seen as free-floating aesthetic artefacts generated by ahistorical figures in a timeless synchronicity of language but works produced by historical figures in diachronic times. (2005: 14)

Yet even if these scholars agree that attending to the authors' stylistic experiments in translation is a recognition of their identity claims, there is no consensus on how to achieve a "decolonizing" translation. Tymoczko (1999) claims that this type of translation must transcend both the literary canons of former colonizers and nationalist identity claims.

In the same vein, Buzelin (2005) argues that examining the ethical and theoretical issues brought up by translating postcolonial, hybrid texts conceals far more complex concerns. She points to the urgency of moving beyond the unproductive dichotomy that opposes (conservative) *domesticating* translations to (revolutionary) *foreignizing* ones. Neither Venuti's minoritizing ethics nor Berman's idealism address the fundamental issues raised by the translation of postcolonial texts (Buzelin 2005: 227, Bandia 2008).

3. Hybridity: A hackneyed yet unavoidable concept

Neither domesticating nor foreignizing translation approaches are suitable for hybrid texts. In postcolonial theory, the concept of hybridity further complicates the definitions of alterity. Simon observes that "[t]he poles of Otherness which supported relations of oppression and contestation have been weakened by the fragmentary nature of contemporary cultural identity" (2002: 17). By definition, hybridity presupposes rejecting both the smoothing out of differences between cultures and the kind of hyper-differentiation that nurtures xenophobic and fundamentalist movements (Simon 1999: 32). While the novel is the hybrid genre *par excellence*, African novels whose aesthetics draws from a wider range of inspirations, including oral tradition, are even more hybrid. It is crucial to contextualize African fiction writing not only with respect to the European novel and oral narratives that predate the colonial period in Africa but also with respect to other cultural forms – such as poetry, theater, painting, and cinema. Semujanga suggests that African novels epitomize a cross-genre that transcends simplistic African and European categories. African novels are the result of a literary creation that constantly negotiates across multiple genres (Semujanga 2001: 155).

Another way to envision hybridity in African novels is to focus on their language. Bandia points for instance to the vernacularization of language through narrative and intertextual references (2001: 126). African writers incorporate words, speech rhythms, proverbs and metaphors from their native language into their novels in French or English. An examination of their language requires analyzing how the writers use different languages, considering their different spheres of usage, and more specifically, differentiating between their intimate language and their language of education (Rao 1963, Mehrez 1992, Djebar 1997, Besemeres 2002). In turn, the different interpretations of these texts, depending on how intimately their readers are connected to the writers' native culture, mirrors this differentiation. Buzelin (2005) aptly recalls the etymology of "vernacular" to emphasize its emotional resonance: vernaculars have traditionally been confined to domestic usage and are thereby languages chosen to articulate intimate matters.

Khatibi's *Amour bilingue*[2] (1983) offers a compelling example of this negotiation between multiple languages: Khatibi allows his readers to engage differently depending on their knowledge of the various languages used: Arabic, and French (Mehrez 1992). He articulates his identity in *bi-langue*, literally 'bi-language', although this novel surpasses even the two languages of its title. The title is written on the front cover in French and Arabic, but a complete interpretation of its meaning

2. Translated by Richard Howard as *Love in Two Languages* (1990).

requires a knowledge of French, classical Arabic, and Algerian dialectal Arabic. The subtleties of the title, which evokes simultaneously a love for two languages, physical love, and mystical love, thus elude those readers who do not share Khatibi's linguistic identity. As Mehrez (1992) has argued, it is fundamental to consider all the languages that inhabit the writers when reading postcolonial texts – and even more so when translating them, although demanding that every translator share the exact same linguistic and cultural background of the authors they are translating might be slightly idealistic, if not altogether unreasonable (Buzelin 2005: 204).

It is neither obvious nor easy for translators to identify all the languages at work in postcolonial novels. Unlike the "visible traces" of vernacular words the writers insert in the main language of their works (Zabus 2007) – which, some scholars argue, might be just a way to meet the expectations of those readers in search of exoticism – they also express many more features of their intimate languages in ways that are not immediately recognizable by the translator. These invisible traces, to carry Zabus's metaphor further, are to be found in the literary practices of these writers rather than at the level of word choice or language choice. At stake in the works I study is *literary* supra-consciousness, rather than "linguistic supra-consciousness" (Gauvain 1997).

Tymoczko demonstrates how Joyce's prose, with its masterfully crafted onomatopoeias, sound similes, paronomasias, and redundancies, is clearly indebted to Celtic poetry, where sonic devices determine the meaning of a poem: "to understand what Joyce is doing in terms of sound and sense, it is helpful to turn to medieval views of language and medieval language practices" (2005: 136). We cannot read and translate Joyce without recognizing his indebtedness to a very specific literary heritage. Translating Joyce thus requires deciphering the influence of an oral and complex form of literary expression on a more familiar form of written literary expression. This kind of hybridity, which is best defined as a space of negotiation between two discrete forms of literary creation and transmission – the encounter between oral and written literature – has recently been the subject of much scholarly attention, especially in the scholarship of African literatures.

Although numerous scholars define African novels as a negotiation between oral and written literatures (see, for instance, Kane 1968, Tine 1984, Gyasi 2006, Bandia 2008), few scholars have engaged with Tymoczko's paradigm. This means that insufficient attention has been paid to the formal poetic codes of oral literatures that inform specific works. In fact, most of the existing research in African literatures and translation studies omits this specific form of hybridity as a unique literary object that bridges oral and written literature.

4. African literatures as translation and in translation

The question of translating African literatures has recently been examined by Gyasi (2006), Bandia (2008), and Batchelor (2009). While Gyasi and Bandia both approach African novels *as* translation, Gyasi focuses on Francophone writers (Kourouma, Lopes, Adiaffi, Sony Lab'ou Tansi, and Monénembo), whereas Bandia examines texts from writers who publish in English or French. Both scholars envision African literatures of Europhone expression as a form of self-translation of the writers' native language and culture, used to subvert the imbalance of power between Africa and its colonizers.

In a short discussion of translation *per se,* Gyasi comments on various approaches suggested or implemented by different scholars, such as Okot p'Bitek, who favors extensive footnotes and bilingual editions and reminds of Appiah, who developed his own paradigm of "thick translation". Bandia (2008) and Sévry (1998), on the other hand, criticize these visible methods of translating because of their potential to turn African literatures into anthropological accounts. Wangui wa Goro used a different strategy in her English translation of *Matigari Ma Njiruungi* by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o; her translation erased much of the "Africanness" of the Kikuyu original, including its use of aphorisms. Wa Goro's domesticating translation is all the more surprising given Ngũgĩ's own vision of translation and his activism in defending native languages in Africa (Ngũgĩ 1986). Furthermore, Gyasi's endorsement of Simpson's suggestion of equivalence between languages reveals a very simplistic vision of the challenges translators face and one that is, unfortunately, shared by most non-translators:

> Since the author has already bridged the gap between the Nigerian idiom and the European one, all the translator has to do is to find the equivalent expression and register in the foreign language. (Simpson in Gyasi 2006: 28)

The notion of equivalence that Simpson claims here, falsely portraying translation as a mechanical transfer, has long been challenged in literary translation, and more specifically in the translation of postcolonial texts. Buzelin (2005, 2006) eloquently demonstrates the sheer complexity of translating hybrid texts that draw on more than one language and culture.

Self-translation is also the key paradigm Bandia uses to describe the writing strategy of African writers. Bandia qualifies "the writing of African orature[3] in European languages" as "compositional translation," a term coined by Adejunmobi in 1988 (Bandia 2008: 167). In his book, and unlike Gyasi, Bandia fully addresses

3. Orature is a portmanteau word that is used by certain scholars. The term draws on Ugandan scholar Zirimu's coinage (1973).

the actual process of translation, which involves a publication in another language produced by a translator who is (usually) not the writer him- or herself. More specifically, he points out the vexed issue of re-presenting vernaculars in translation and laments that translation studies has yet to address this issue properly:[4]

> Although much has been written about hybridity and polylingualism in postcolonial literature, including code-switching as a writing technique (Omole 1998, Gordon and Williams 1998), translation studies has paid little attention to these current realities, probably because translation has often been conceived as a means of bridging the gap between two distinct, autonomous and homogeneous linguistic entities. (Bandia 2008: 147)

According to Bandia, code-switching could provide a solution for translators who are sufficiently familiar with the native oral language and culture that serve as a palimpsest for the original work. Drawing on Jakobson's categories, Bandia describes code-switching as a process that requires both intersemiotic and interlingual translation. Essentially, what translators need to fully realize is that Europhone African literatures already represent a form of mediation between an oral metatext and a written form: the responsibility of a translator thus consists in rehabilitating this metatext. According to Bandia, Okara's translator Jean Sévry is a perfect example of a translator who managed to fully comprehend the mediating function of African texts. On the other hand, erasure of the oral metatext in translations occurs through the translators' decision to embellish the language or to delete repetitions and crude or vulgar language, and so on (Bandia 2008).

Gyasi's and Bandia's studies of African literatures written in French and English suggest that the debate on writing as a form of self-translation is still active to the point that it overshadows the real issues posed by translation between languages. Kathryn Batchelor's *Decolonizing Translation* (2009) focuses on how translators handle the range of linguistic innovations[5] in the original works and argues that translators generally tend to erase these innovations. Batchelor's corpus includes all the works of sub-Saharan Francophone fiction translated into English up to and including 2008. By applying Berman's categories (1984, 1985)[6] to qualify such erasures, she reminds her readers of the crucial role that postcolonial scholars, such as Bhabha and Spivak, have ascribed to these innovations.

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4. For a full discussion on this topic, see Buzelin (2005, 2006), Lavoie (2002), and Chapdelaine & Lane-Mercier (2001).

5. These linguistic innovations include: "visible traces" (Zabus 2007), French basilect and mesolect, relexification, puns, and onomastics.

6. Especially ennoblement, rationalization, clarification, homogenization.

Batchelor discusses the diverse strategies of translation studies scholars for "decolonizing translation" (foreignizing, proposed by Venuti, and literal translation, by Niranjana) as well as their critics (Robinson 1997). Drawing on Tymoczko (1999), Batchelor argues that "decolonizing translation" requires turning away from the philological tradition of 19th century positivism and embracing the ambiguities and uncertainties that characterize these works of African literature. Batchelor acknowledges the difficulty of negotiating ambiguity in translation and recalls how House's categories of quasi-untranslatability (1997) coincide with the kinds of linguistic innovation she studies.

Another aspect addressed by Batchelor is the translation of sociolects, since replacing one sociolect by another risks creating an incongruous sociolinguistic context. While Buzelin extensively demonstrated the benefits of *bricolage* as a more responsible alternative to this substitution of sociolects (2005: 146), Batchelor evaluates the consequences and limits of sociolinguistic localization and advocates instead for the "suspension of disbelief" that is required of readers of literature in translation.[7] The translation of puns is, according to Batchelor, less problematic, as long as translators are willing to embrace Henry's functionalist approach (2003), which consists in stressing the emotional value of puns and how these construct meaning throughout the work – in other words, as long as translators understand the function of puns in a specific text and do not try to address each one individually.

In addressing the specific and concrete issues posed by translating linguistic innovations in African fiction, Batchelor criticizes the ethnocentric views of both Berman and Venuti, whose translation theories "[appropriate] the foreign text for domestic political claims" (2009: 235), and suggests that Venuti's support of highly visible translations displays an elitist disregard of readers. Abstract concepts such as Bhabha's in-betweenness, third space, and hybridity (1990) do not provide much guidance to translators who must concretely address the myriad of challenges posed by the translation of works of African literatures. For Batchelor, it is also important to question the qualification of specific textual features as subversive: Should, for instance, popular oral speech in Lopes's *Le pleurer-rire* (1982) be traced back to Queneau or Céline or should it be interpreted as a typical African feature? Is Lopes borrowing from or ostensibly subverting the ex-colonizer's language and literary canon? Is he doing both?

We are only able to reconstruct the translation projects of translators by examining the series of micro-decisions they make (Batchelor 2009: 260, referring to

7. Batchelor points to Bassnett (1998) on travel literature and Cronin (2000) on translations in general.

Tymoczko 1999).[8] Recognizing the agency of the translator means acknowledging the myth of a neutral translation and accepting that the translated text is just one version of the source text among many, as Tymoczko originally suggested (1999). This metonymic vision of translation embraces the core notion of selectivity: "by allowing specific attributes of the source texts to dominate, and hence, to represent the entirety of the work" (Tymoczko 1999: 282), translators show their agency and ideology.

These foundational essays by Gyasi, Bandia, and Batchelor confirm the need for additional study of the translation of African literatures. Although both Gyasi and Bandia reaffirm the importance of oral metatexts in the fabric of African literatures, their research opens up the possibility of exploring this question from a different angle. Indeed, delineating the metatext as a literary object bound by specific poetic codes allows us to address the form of writing as an essential statement for African writers and to move away from an ethnographic approach. One cannot fail to notice that African literatures have received far more attention for their sociopolitical value and subject matter than for their value as works of art, even though their artistic forms determine their content. Over twenty-five years ago, Isidore Okpewho criticized how African literatures were being translated:

> As comparative ethnologists – concerned, that is, with how the world of the 'primitive' compared with that of the 'civilized' man – [translators] put almost total emphasis on units of thought and culture to the exclusion of the aesthetic substratum of the text. (Okpewho 1992a: 112)

Okpewho's observation is particularly true for African fiction. A closer look at genre will provide useful insight into genre's impact on translation.

5. Matters of genre

In order to examine the connections between oral and written literary productions, we must understand the disputed and fluctuating notion of genre. In the 19th century, prose poetry challenged the clear-cut distinction between prose and poetry and conventional assumptions about what each genre should be. The traditional dichotomy between poetry and prose, which dates back to Aristotle's *Poetics* (Dessons and Meschonnic 2005), has been reassessed in recent scholarship. It is useful to turn to Meschonnic to understand how and why this dichotomy is problematic. Poetry has long been associated with metrical feet and verse (*versus* indicates a line break),

8. Folkart (1991) also suggests a similar approach for reconstructing the agency of translators based on the specific filters they apply to the source text.

and has been constructed in opposition to prose (*prosa* means moving forward). Meschonnic contends that poetry is neither a form nor a genre; instead, poetry includes a variety of both genres, such as epics and lyric poetry, and forms, such as sonnets and verse (Meschonnic 1994: 12). As such, prosody and rhythm should not be considered as an exclusive characteristic of poetry:

> [La disparition de la rime] ne supprime ni les homophonies de la langue ni leur sémantique latente. Simplement, elle laisse la place à la subjectivation des " prosodies personnelles", comme écrivait Apollinaire. '[The disappearance of rhyme] does not eliminate homophones, which are inherent in language, nor their latent semantics but only makes way for the subjectification of what Apollinaire called "individual prosodies."' (Meschonnic 1994: 12. My translation[9])

Mallarmé, one of the leaders of the poetic revolution in the late 19th century, associated verse with literature as a whole, without distinguishing between poetry and prose:

> Dans le genre appelé prose, il y a des vers, quelques fois admirables, de tous rythmes. Mais en vérité, il n'y a pas de prose […]. Toutes les fois qu'il y a effort au style, il y a versification. 'Within the genre called prose, there are verses, sometimes admirable, in all kinds of rhythm. But in reality, there is no such thing as prose […]. Whenever there is an attempt at style, there is versification.'
>
> (Mallarmé 1945: 867)

If one goes back to the strict etymology of verse, *versus*, it seems that the initial distinction between verse and prose lies in line breaks rather than prosody. The long-standing superimposition of poetry and verse, in turn, may have created later confusion, presenting prose as a genre void of prosody. Dessons and Meschonnic rightly observe that the traditional Western distinction between prose and poetry, which was long portrayed as self-explanatory and universal, is as confusing as it is enduring. First, not all texts in verse can be considered poetry; secondly, rhythm is not dependent on meter. Jacques Roubaud contradicted himself when he wrote in 1995 that "[i]l n'y a pas de rythme dans la prose. Il n'y a pas de rythme sans mètre et il n'y a pas de mètre dans la prose" '[t]here is no rhythm in prose. There is no rhythm without meter and there is no meter in prose' (quoted in Dessons and Meschonnic 2005: 112); in fact, Roubaud's anaphoric "there is no" (*il n'y a pas*, in the original French) itself contains a perceptible rhythm.

Just as poetry is still too often associated with verse, novels presumably are the epitome of narrative prose. This additional distinction between poetry and prose entails the dichotomy between narrative and non-narrative genres. Combe argues, for instance, that poetry does not preclude narrative forms (citing prose poetry

9. All translations are mine unless otherwise specified.

as his example) and coexists with poetic novels or poetic narratives; he suggests that there are even poem-novels and novel-poems (2002: b2–b3). Certain literary traditions do not make this distinction: the concepts of verse and prose are of little use for describing Hebrew biblical verses, for instance (Meschonnic 1994: 13). It is therefore problematic to ascribe universal value to these categories instead of acknowledging the exclusively Western understanding of the duality of the sign and opposition between verse and prose.

Specialists of oral literature and ethnologists alike have pointed out the false universalism ascribed to these categorizations and dichotomies. Zumthor (1983: 170) and Finnegan (1977) agree that distinguishing between prose and poetry contributes little to understanding African oral literatures. The very term *genre* is itself problematic – conveying Western conventions disguised as universal ones. Zumthor aptly remarks that the actual distinction between prose and verse poetry can only be observed in written form, that is to say, spatially (170). In the same vein, ethnologist Jean Derive suggests we use caution when trying to define, and ultimately, categorize specific literary forms in Africa (1997: 218). Derive focuses on the global significance of audible poetic devices in traditional African literature ("*littérature africaine traditionnelle*"), yet he insists on the notion of the untranslatability of poetry:

> Nous ne reviendrons pas […] sur les classiques problèmes de traduction particulièrement insurmontables dans le cas de la poésie où **les propriétés du signifiant, qu'il est impossible de conserver intactes dans cette opération**, sont souvent – et nous avons vu que c'était aussi le cas en Afrique – plus pertinentes que celle du signifié. 'We shall not come back […] to the classic translation problems that are particularly insurmountable when it comes to translating poetry because **the properties of the signifier, which cannot be kept untouched during this operation**, are often – and we saw that this was also the case in Africa – more relevant than the properties of the signified.' (Derive 1997: 210. Emphasis mine)

After having established – very convincingly – the crucial role that *signifiers* play in the African poetic traditions of Mandinka and Fulani, Derive presents their untranslatability as an unquestionable statement. He then criticizes French translators, who put forward the argument of the so-called "génie de la langue française", for resisting this language play and refusing to acknowledge them in their translations:

> Et je regrette parfois que le traducteur, quelque peu prisonnier de ses habitudes d'écriture française, qui refuse l'excès des répétitions et qui fuit les parallélismes, fasse disparaître dans la version française les repères linguistiques marquant la mesure rythmique. 'And I sometimes lament that translators, somehow bound to the French writing style that has them reject excessive repetitions and avoid parallelisms, erase in their French version the linguistic markers that create rhythm.' (Derive 1997: 213)

Paradoxically, Derive then offers examples of translation choices that do in fact take into account the audible dimension of certain *signifiers*. I will return to this paradox and French writing conventions ("génie de la langue française") in the case studies.

In a study on translating African literatures, it is crucial to ask: how do African writers relate to the concept of novel as a genre? Tro observes that novels are the only genre that cannot be found in African oral literature (2009: 2) and Booker suggests that this absence might explain the problematic relationship that African writers have to literary genres as a concept (1998: 9), especially since novels represent the narrative genre that supplanted oral narrative forms in Europe. African writers tend to consider novels as a complement to oral narrative forms and not as a replacement for them (Booker 1998: 20). For these reasons, African novels have always been characterized by transgeneric aesthetics, although early critics did not realize what was actually at stake in doing so (Bisanswa 2006: 16) and applied categories that did not do justice to their specific structure (Semujanga 2001: 156).

Adiaffi's *Silence, on développe* (1992) combines different literary genres, exploiting various forms, functions, and poetics, but it has, for lack of a better term, been branded as a novel (Tro 2009: 2). As a matter of fact, all the literary forms that characterize Anyi oral traditions[10] are employed in Adiaffi's writing and thus subvert its classification as a novel. Adiaffi himself claimed that the best metaphor to express the hybrid nature of his writings is *n'zassa* (Anyi patchwork), a genre without genre that cannot be pigeonholed into any of the traditional Western categories of novel, drama, or poetry (Tro 2009: 2). Labou Tansi referred to his fictional writing as "fables"; Nganang labeled his "urban tales"; and Werewere Liking chose "Song-Novel" (*Chant Roman*) to appear on the front cover of some of her works (Gbanou 2006: 53). This unease with the novel genre is, in turn, mirrored in published translations: when "novel" ("roman") is used in the French-language original, it is occasionally converted into "autobiography" in English translations (Batchelor 2009: 3–16). Waberi, responding to Mabanckou's question as to why he had turned away from the short story genre, remarked that his publisher had decided to call his latest book[11] "novelistic variations" (*variations romanesques*) despite the fact that this particular work flirted ostentatiously with poetry, and concluded that genre labels were unimportant to him (Waberi 2009). In short, African writers consider the novel to be a trivial, or even irrelevant, categorization; there are even African writers who strictly refuse to identify their works as novels (Zimmerman 2005: 9). One could of course argue that Bakhtin (1978) aptly demonstrated the hybrid nature of

10. Tales, legends, myths, epics, drama, poems, songs, war songs, drummed language, and proverbs (Tro 2009: 2).

11. *Rift, Routes, Rails* (2000).

the novel, its capacity to absorb various other forms, and its generic multiplicity. Yet accepting Bakhtin's definition without analyzing it further would mask the unease with the novel that a number of African writers have expressed. Furthermore, this generic elasticity is actually detrimental for translation purposes since no specific expectations have been established in terms of translating the aesthetics of these works, as opposed to ones that are explicitly labeled "poems."

6. The poetics of African fiction and the creative license of prose translators

Postcolonial scholars have recently[12] taken a keen interest in the writing projects of African authors, and this new interest has grown to such an extent that it occasionally creates expectations that some writers are tempted to meet rather than express spontaneously, if only to fit into an existing niche in the book market (Gbanou 2006: 41). Scholars have focused on linguistic and syntactical differences of African texts and the way these subvert Western conventions. Insidiously, it is as if African texts needed to convey fundamental language and cultural differences in order to be acknowledged among readers and critics (Feze 2006: 15–16). It is thus surprising that the same critics and scholars who express such a heightened concern for difference do not take into account the poetic signature of African writers, all the more so as many of these writers are also poets.[13] Feze, discussing Francophone African literatures, suggests that this insistence on difference needs to be transcended in order for these writings to be appreciated as works of literature in their own right (2006: 16). It is also possible to argue that this foreignness is inseparable from their literary fabric and contributes to the creativity and inventiveness for which African writers have been praised. Nonetheless, Feze's position alerts us to an overemphasis on difference, which might explain the obvious lack of interest in the poetics of African literatures. Scholars and critics who do not acknowledge poetics as a fundamental element of African literary artistry affect how translators of African works of fiction position themselves with regard to the works they translate.

Translation studies scholar Antoine Berman pointed out that prose translation is considered less prestigious than the translation of poetry; this lesser status obfuscates both the existence of specific forms in novels and the need to translate them (1999: 50–51):

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12. This contrasts with the earlier, Negritude era focus on thematic content.

13. Five of the six writers examined in the case studies have published poetry.

> Dans la mesure où la prose est considérée comme inférieure à la poésie, les déformations de la traduction sont ici mieux acceptées – quand elles ne passent pas inaperçues. Car elles portent souvent sur des points difficilement décelables. Il est facile de voir en quoi un poème de Hölderlin a été massacré ; il l'est moins de voir en quoi un roman de Faulkner l'a été, surtout si la traduction semble "bonne" (c'est-à-dire esthétique). Voilà pourquoi il est urgent d'élaborer une analytique de la traduction de la prose littéraire. (Berman 1999: 52)

> 'Insofar as the novel is considered a lower form of literature than poetry, the deformations of translation are more accepted in prose, when they do not pass unperceived. For they operate on points that do not immediately reveal themselves. It is easy to detect how a poem by Hölderlin has been massacred. It isn't so easy to see what was done to a novel by Kafka or Faulkner, especially if the translation seems "good". The deforming system functions here in complete tranquility. This is why it is urgent to elaborate an analytic for the translation of novels.
> (Berman translated by Venuti 2004: 279)

One recognizes the mark of Novalis and Benjamin on Berman's conceptualization of the novel. However, Berman is not the only scholar to question generic assumptions as they do or do not apply to translation. The leeway granted to prose translators has also been pointed out by Folkart, who outright deplored that "target-language users, when hungry enough, show an astonishing capacity to make do with even the most mediocre translation – at least insofar as prose fiction is concerned" (2007: 141). African literature scholar and translator Pamela Smith, recounting her experience translating Yoruba writer Fagunwa, argued that:

> [Translators] could perhaps breath [*sic*] easier when translating prose, which, by its very nature, permits a kind of free form fluidity, giving an almost carte blanche "prosaic" license that poetry's comparatively rigid form would almost consider barbaric. From that point of view, the concern with sound as a central issue in prose translation is debatable. (Smith 2001: 744)

In short, translators of African fiction are influenced by two conditions: on one hand, by literary critics that ascribe specific attributes[14] to "African literature" (more often than not written in the singular) and, on the other hand, by the unspoken tenet that prose translators should benefit from a creative license that is not granted to translators of poetry, as Berman pointed out. The next section will demonstrate how the problematic notion of genre and the prevailing tenet governing the translation of "prose" are further complicated by unclear and fluctuating definitions of what is commonly referred to as "orality."

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14. These attributes can, moreover, vary from one extreme to the other. Ndiaye (2001) fittingly recalled that the African novel was first portrayed by the critics as a perfect mirroring of the Western model, then as a true reflection of the African oral tradition.

7. Defining sound motifs as aural aesthetics

Orality in written African literatures has been mostly approached either from a generic perspective or a discursive point of view. However, the aesthetics of orality has received little substantial attention – either treated superficially through impressionistic descriptions or anchored in essentialist doctrines (in the vein of Senghor's Negritude). Eileen Julien's *African Novels and the Question of Orality* (1992) offers, for instance, a generic reading of orality in which she presents orality as a form or narrative genre. Julien analyzes novels from a strictly intertextual point of view: she establishes their connections to three major oral sub-genres (epics, fables, and initiation stories).

Another common focus among scholars is that of orality as performance, which is the premise of Koné's essay, *Des textes oraux au roman moderne, étude sur les avatars de la tradition orale dans le roman ouest-africain* (1993). Koné emphasizes the role given to performers and their discourse in modern West African novels. Although he observes that orality is also expressed in non-narrative forms (96–105), he hardly touches upon the sonorous dimension of orality. Koné dismisses the issue of orality by acknowledging in passing that the connections between orality and writing, the audible and silent reading, oral texts and novelistic texts, are complex (192).

The blatant avoidance of aesthetic questions related to orality in African novels by postcolonial scholars is all the more surprising given the fact that research on oral literatures gives prominence to these aesthetic questions. For instance, the second chapter of Okpewho's *African Oral Literature* (1992b), titled "Stylistic Qualities", analyzes a wide range of rhetorical devices, such as repetitions, parallelism, parataxis, tonality, and ideophones.

The most rigorous treatment of sonority in studies of orality is, unsurprisingly, found in essays explicitly devoted to oral poetry, defined by oral literature scholar Christiane Seydou as a:

> [V]éritable triomphe de l'oralité, où chaque mot est reconnu dans sa totalité, sa face sonore recouvrant une force et une valeur égales à celle de sa charge et de ses connotations sémantiques. '[A] genuine triumph of orality in which each word is acknowledged in its entirety and in which the sonorous aspect of the word is given a force and value equal to those of its semantic load and connotations.'
>
> (1991: 25–26)

Seydou's conceptualization of orality implicitly becomes one of aurality and covers precisely the aspects obscured by both Julien and Koné. In fact, the sonorous is obliterated even by those critics who construct orality as an essential source of inspiration for written African literatures across the centuries.

My observation points to the unclear delineations in orality as a field of study; it is therefore important to establish an explicit terminology for analyzing these African literatures. For the purpose of this study, I opted for "sound motif," an aesthetics that implies subvocalization and can be likened to Pound's melopoeia, "wherein the words are charged, over and above their meaning, with some musical properties" (Pound 1954: 25). Pound's own translations show his extreme concern with the prosody of the source text: melopoeia, phanopoeia, and logopoeia[15] make up his three guiding principles as a translator (Mihalache 2002, Bassnett 2002). Because of his concern about re-creating important elements of sonority, Pound often produced "free" translations, which took into account more dimensions than other translations that seemed, on the surface, more literal (Mihalache 2002, Bassnett 2002).

The choice of "sound motif" also draws on specific definitions in the fields of musicology[16] and cognitive sciences and refers specifically to a play on signifiers that is recognizable by the ear. The term "motif" contains more important and interesting connotations than "pattern", notably its etymology relating to motive and motivation. In the chapters devoted to case studies, I will use "patterns" or "devices" to refer to the different sonic devices or techniques identified in the authors' texts. "Sound motif", however, will be reserved to refer to patterns that participate in a motif that characterizes a specific text and relates to an oral literary matrix. The relationship between motif, motive, and motivations is hence crucial for understanding the connections between the texts I examine in this study and preexisting, established stylistic conventions – in other words, for understanding how the respective poetic signatures of these writers are informed by their literary heritage.

African literature scholar Kouadio (2005) does conceptualize orality in its sonic aspect in his study examining French-language poetry from Côte d'Ivoire. Kouadio argues that issues of expressivity and meaning in poetry have long been considered by Western critics as secondary and that the concept of rhythm in the broad sense (understood as sonorous materiality or mute transcription of the human voice) has never been granted sufficient weight (Kouadio 2005: 285). At the same time, his approach shies away from the limitations of formalism because he emphasizes the semantic functions of prosodic accentuation, which connects elements to create meaning (190). Furthermore, the wording techniques of second-generation Côte d'Ivoire poets – for instance, parallelism, scansion, anaphora, repetition, refrain,

15. Phanopoeia is defined as "a casting of images upon the visual imagination" and logopoeia as "the dance of the intellect among the words" (Pound 1954: 25).

16. In musicology, the term "sound motif" refers to recurring thematic elements: "The musical leitmotiv is normally used as a kind of signpost that helps the audience to make connections between different elements of the representation." (Prieto 2007: 149).

and crossover of words – are informed by a well-defined oral art. The myth of "rythme nègre" can hardly explain these techniques; instead, the emphasis on sonority reveals the writers' culturally conscious choices (134). Such a grounding in native oral literatures, according to Kouadio, does not preclude borrowing from other literary or artistic movements.[17] Second-generation Côte d'Ivoire poets share an undeniable kinship with Césaire and surrealist writers, especially in terms of their emphasis on sound structures.

This kinship will be discussed further in the chapter devoted to Côte d'Ivoire writer Jean-Marie Adiaffi. I also argue that recognizing the significance of sound motifs in any oral poetic heritage is not suggesting that this artistic form belongs exclusively to oral literatures. Rather than assert any essentialist claim, my analysis illuminates the potential of sound motifs to establish a "poetics of relation" (Glissant 1990).

8. A theoretical prelude to sound translation

Acknowledging the significance of sound motifs in translating African literatures is informed by the concepts of an interdisciplinary set of scholars: Meschonnic and Fraser (translation studies), Zumthor (ethnopoetics), McLuhan and Ong (media theory), and Frye (literary theory). In this section, I discuss the pertinence of these related theories and lay out the theoretical framework for my analysis.

It is helfpul to start with linguist, theoretician, and translator Meschonnic, notably his essays entitled *Pour la poétique II*: *Épistémologie de l'écriture poétique de la traduction* (1973) and *Critique du rythme*: *Anthropologie historique du langage* (1982). Meschonnic's definition of rhythm was fittingly emphasized by Kouadio for its relevance in understanding orality in Côte d'Ivoire poetry. Meschonnic's theory both draws attention to the sound structures of literary texts and raises the translators' awareness of the particular workings of the latter. The first and most common acceptation of rhythm is that of "accentuation" (hence distinct from prosody); a second, broader and more idiosyncratic definition involves prosody. This second understanding draws on Meschonnic's conceptualization of orality as the primacy of rhythm and prosody. For Meschonnic, orality is not the opposite of writing; rather, it possesses its own semantics and acts as the subjective and cultural force organizing discourse within a literary work (Meschonnic 1982: 236). What is essential here is Meschonnic's claim that orality is not only a phenomenon perceivable

17. Kouadio refers more specifically to Novarina's interest in the sonic aspect of orality as well as to writers such as Bossuet, Rabelais, and Beckett whose works were meant to be read out loud (293).

exclusively by the ear or an ephemeral mode of transmission; rather, he envisions how orality can be realized in writing.

To determine whether readers are likely to appreciate how the organization of signifiers[18] influence their understanding of global meaning, it is useful to turn to Northrop Frye. According to Frye, the act of reading is both centrifugal and centripetal. Centrifugal reading, which he suggests is the first mode of reading, pertains to the subject matter being referred to (the signified). Centrifugal reading represents the functional aspect of reading, which aims at collecting information. The second mode, called centripetal reading, immerses readers into the sensory core of reading – including its sonorous dimension[19] (Frye 1957: 73). Depending on what motivates the reader at the moment they approach the text, either centrifugal or centripetal reading prevails. We may assume that fiction writing primarily involves a centrifugal reading mode. Frye, however, claims that centripetal reading underlies all literary texts, since collecting information is secondary to the reading experience (in contrast with informative texts). As a general rule, the act of reading any text, informative and literary, draws on both modes (Frye 1957: 74–75). Furthermore, Dessons and Meschonnic suggest that prosodic organization creates another layer of cognitive activity – forming thematic chains that participate in the creation of meaning, regardless of the reader's perception (Dessons and Meschonnic 2005: 44). Addressing the question of perception would require a detour into cognitive sciences and would take us too far afield. It is sufficient, however, to acknowledge that those two modes are not mutually exclusive.

In his *Introduction à la poésie orale* (1983), medievalist and ethnopoetician Paul Zumthor establishes salient connections between oral and written compositions. Zumthor describes the different stages of metamorphosis between poems and songs, or oral tales and written narratives. A poem composed in writing but performed orally (and vice versa) changes nature and function; these mutations sometimes remain virtual until performed; they are buried in the text, as another potential text to be realized in their performance (Zumthor 1983: 38). Some texts, when read silently, signal to their reader that they should be read out loud, that a physical voice informed their composition (*ibid.*) Zumthor's latter remark implies that whenever a written text is informed by an oral poetic heritage, it also calls for oral performance and aural reception. In "The Ear in Translation" (1971), Rabassa, Gabriel Garcia Marquez's translator, develops this point further:

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18. "Signifier" and "signified" are used whenever they are part of the terminology of the scholar in question.

19. As Fraser points out, Saussure suggested the opposite paradigm when he posited that sound patterns are an external shell [signifier] and what is being referred to is a conceptual core [signified] (Fraser 2007: 133).

> Ear is important in translation because it really lies at the base of all good writing. Writing is not truly a substitute for thought, it is a substitute for sound. […] So that when a person writes, he is speaking, and when a person reads, he is listening. (1971: 82)

What Zumthor aptly rectifies in his scholarship is the common misconception that written poetry is governed by more rules than oral compositions are. In fact, oral poetry is an elaborate artform determined by complex rules (1983: 80–81). The conventions governing oral poetic compositions usually include phonic rules that contribute to creating or reinforcing rhymes, such as alliterations, sonic echoes, or scansion (140). This play on sound, especially when reaching a certain density, influences meaning.

To contextualize this non-scriptocentric approach, it is useful to turn to media theoreticians McLuhan and Ong who offer a chronologic approach to spoken and written language and establish the preexistence of the spoken medium over the written one. From his perspective as a translation studies scholar, Fraser observes that McLuhan and Ong's diachronic bias is cast in rigid categories that prevent us from fully realizing the manifold connections between the two media (2007: 14). McLuhan and Ong depict the transition from an oral to a written medium exclusively in terms of loss whereas Fraser points to the formidable potential and flexibility of alphabetic writing which, because of its capacity for phonetic imitation, allows us to reproduce or represent all kinds of nuances, dialects, accents, and phonetic distortions (Fraser 2007: 108–109); in fact, according to Fraser, alphabetic writing is perfectly suitable for relaying the spoken medium. What is more, the attributes given to each medium by McLuhan and Ong have been weakened by the digital turn, which further blurs the distinction between written and spoken words:

> Telephone and recording technology make oral communication every bit as remote, private, and uninvolved as written communication. Linear as well is the magnetic tape to which the spoken word is routinely conferred. The voice on this tape is quite as permanent and storable, as subject to archiving as any written form. (Fraser 2007: 109)

What Fraser remarked not so long ago is now happening on an entirely different scale. The added complexity induced by the digital era will be discussed in depth in the last chapter of this book because of the impact these technological developments have on translated texts.

The preliminary concepts presented above allow us to address the different ways of theorizing sound within a translation studies framework. Few full-fledged attempts to do so had been made before Fraser in 2007. Even though Meschonnic had posited rhythm as a translation principle – suggesting that rhythm bears more meaning than the signified itself (1973: 269–270) – he never theorized the question of addressing sound for translation purposes. Fraser draws on Frye's centrifugal

and centripetal modes to suggest different stages of translation. The first of these stages, Cratylian[20] translation, is implemented whenever the text is viewed as "fundamentally united in its vocal and semantic dimensions" (Fraser 2007: 183), in other words, when the source text's sound patterns are equally valued as its conventional, referential meaning. Fraser's theory is motivated by what sound can convey over and above what is referred to. Folkart provides an eloquent illustration of this category:

> It is the acoustic texture of Yeats's elegy, the way line 21 repeats the vowel sounds of line 2, that makes a statement about time passing, or rather *shows* time passing, and what it does to us. Poetry is a way of being in the world, and making meaning of it. (1999: 34)

Other critics and translators have examined the intricate relationship between sound structure and conventional semantic meaning. Rabassa pointed out how sound structure may reinforce or negate semantic meaning in novelistic narratives and suggested that their interweaving, albeit subjective and poetic in nature, can hardly be ignored by translators, whether at the reading or the translation stages:

> [W]hat we appreciate in writing is much the same as what we look for in rhetoric […]–sound, whether heard or imagined; sound which can either enhance or detract from the meaning. The translator with a tin ear is as deadly as a tone-deaf musician. […] He must have a good ear for what his author is saying and he must have a good ear for what he is saying himself. (Rabassa 1971: 82 and 85)

It is a commonly accepted fact that that sound symbolism, sometimes qualified as "expressive reduplication," is a widespread occurrence in many languages (Skoda 1982).

The second category of sound translation Fraser proposes is schismatic. The "schismatic" qualifier suggests a departure from conventional semantic meaning within which sound patterns gradually become the core axis of translation. Within that schismatic category, three gradual stages of translation are offered, including a last stage in which conventional semantic meaning is completely evacuated.

However, what Fraser terms "forms" – rhymes, alliterations, and assonances, to name a few – do not constitute a category of sound patterns worth theorizing in his eyes. These "forms", Fraser claims, may be the very reason why most translators are unable to conceptualize sound in translation. Is Fraser correct in assuming that this specific category that he terms "forms" eludes theorizing altogether? As a matter of fact, these "forms" precisely make up what I previously defined as sound motifs,

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20. This term refers to Plato's Cratylus for whom the verbal sign imitates or suggests the object it designates.

and they represent specific composition rules in the oral literatures that function as a palimpsestic heritage for the texts I examine in this study. Assonances, alliterations, paronomasia, sound echoes, internal rhymes or otherwise intricate sound patterns all participate in the production of meaning by adding to, modifying, or deterring from conventional referential meaning. In the following case studies, I will demonstrate the social and literary values of these sound motifs, both at the individual and collective levels. I will apply Fraser's suggested theory of Cratylian translation on occasion, but I will not use his notion of schismatic translation, because it is irrelevant within the particular context of these narratives (beyond experimental purposes).

Folkart and Tymoczko have both proposed conceptual frameworks that more aptly justify the translation of sound motifs as I have defined them. Valency (Folkart 2007) and metonymic translation (Tymoczko 1999) converge in multiple ways. By adopting one or the other of those frameworks, translators foreground specific characteristics of the text and deprioritize those they deem less motivated by the author's intended poetics. Drawing on the particular context of postcolonial Irish literature, Tymoczko states:

> Sound-based meanings are one aspect of the aesthetic privileging of sound over sense in early Celtic poetics, a feature that has long been recognized in the critical literature. (1999: 262)

Metonymic translation is based on the principle of selecting and emphasizing specific attributes deemed to be able to stand for the whole text. From a strictly hermeneutic point of view, this paradigm encourages translators to engage in textual archeology, as it were, in order to identify what is at stake. Valency is a complementary concept that Folkart establishes with regard to poetry as a genre – as defined by Western conventions; valency is "a measure of the extent to which the materiality of the poem contributes to its truth-value" (Folkart 2007: 59). Valency can be applied to measure performativity (a category that encompasses sound-play and rhythm); the terms that Folkart uses to define performativity recall Dessons and Meschonnic's definition of significance because they point to the construction of meaning induced by phonetic overlap. Imagery, for instance, is in itself a valency informed by the valency of prosody (Folkart 2007: 67). Like Tymoczko, Folkart argues that translators hierarchize valencies according to how motivated these valencies are in a particular text. Both Tymoczko and Folkart remark that not all intertextual connections, for instance, are crucial to the workings of a particular poem; rather, the translator him- or herself must determine which of these connections to recreate. Tymoczko (2005) aptly demonstrates how James Joyce's works show striking affinities with Old Irish literature in terms of sound structure; Folkart remarks that folk prosody and motifs are implemented with such systematic

regularity in W.H. Auden's poems that they become defining elements of his idiolect (Folkart 2007: 92). In the act of translating, some of these intertextual relationships may be weakened, but their function and workings within the text can still be reconstructed. At stake here is what these particular prosodic motifs *do* to the text, regardless of any generic attribution to it.

Starting from these same generic misconceptions about the translation of texts labeled as prose, Smith, a scholar and translator of African literatures, urges to strive for a different approach. She draws on the example of translating the texts of Yoruba writer D. O. Fagunwa:

> The prose translator would be more concerned about the more central issue of faithfulness to the sense, authorial intent, and meaning of the prose text rather than with rhythm. Unless, perhaps, the prose text author specifically indicates his or her preoccupation with sound/rhythm; in which case, sound, as an aesthetic value, would be inextricably tied to cognitive meaning. Such is the case with Yoruba fiction writer, D. O. Fagunwa. (Smith 2001: 744)

Considered as the father of the Yoruba novel, Fagunwa is also known for his exceptional mastery of language and the active role he played in establishing written literature in Yoruba. More specifically, his creative implementation of repetition, including sound motifs reminiscent of litany and incantation, engage his readers on an emotional level (Smith 2001: 749). "In Fagunwa's works," Smith observes, "sound is an integral part of meaning: sound, in some cases, advances meaning to the extent that sound, in such cases, is meaning" (745). Above all, Smith expresses the difficulty she faced when translating Fagunwa's works to recreate his sound patterns in a novelistic text. She recalls the polemic that arose when the English translation of Fagunwa's *Ogbudju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale*, Soyinka's *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons*, was published in 1968. Soyinka performed what he termed a "*creative* translation" that was based on the euphonies that structure Fagunwa's writing. Some Yoruba critics accused Soyinka of usurping Fagunwa's text in a way that went far beyond translation choices[21] and qualified it as treason. Soyinka insisted that he had, on the contrary, been faithful to the style and sensitivity of Fagunwa by preserving the movement and fluidity of the author's prose, including its euphonic qualities.

> Yet this acknowledgment did not prevent Yoruba critics from accusing Soyinka of betraying Fagunwa's voice by creating an overlay of himself in his **literal** translation of Fagunwa's *Ogbuju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale* rather than giving a **faithful** rendition of the novel. (Smith 2001: 750. Emphasis mine)

21. Critics also emphasized the fact that Soyinka's name overshadowed Fagunwa's name on the front cover, which was likely the publisher's strategy.

It is rather unusual for *literal* to be presented in opposition to *faithful*, but this opposition likely reveals the particular weakness and inefficiency of those categories more than anything else. Smith offers a minute analysis of her own confrontation with Fagunwa's text as a translator:

> Recognizing from the outset that the restraints of lexical and syntactical peculiarities, especially Fagunwa's stylistic subtleties and structural devices, will be paramount, I risked directness of language and stylized refinement almost to the point of oversimplification of language, and opted to channel energies into achieving the goal of transcribing what Soyinka and other Yoruba-speaking scholars and critics have identified as the essence of Fagunwa's art, that is "the vivid sense of event and **the fusion of sound and action.**" Throughout the translation, euphony was a challenge, and admittedly became an obsession. The task clearly was how to transcribe the figurative implications and the tone of Fagunwa's narratives, and achieve the interplay of sense and sound so that the imagery would be resonant with the vitality of the Yoruba original. The obligation then was to try to retain the sound of the original and to reproduce the effects that depend on the emphasis of sound, the rhythmic cadences such as alliteration and assonance for the translation to constitute a novel in its own right. (Smith 1993: 220. Emphasis mine)

Smith's approach to reading and translating Fagunwa's acknowledges a specific style that is informed by oral Yoruba literature and implemented in novelistic writing. Her *modus operandi* comes closest to the one that I adopt in my analysis of the case studies that will be presented in the next three chapters. Like Soyinka, Smith points out the inescapable connections between sound motifs and narrative highlights in Fagunwa's novels. For Smith, as for Folkart, sound has the ability to emphasize another dimension, be it on the narrative or poetic levels. This particular interconnection will be further explored in the case studies, especially in the chapter devoted to Ayi Kwei Armah.

9. African literatures: Which ones?

Any attempt at geographically delineating the corpus requires me to return to the premise that lies at the core of this book: the writings of specific African authors are informed by an oral literary heritage that shapes their aesthetics. Even with this explicit premise, it is not an innocent endeavor to define a specific literary corpus within "African literatures."

Moura (1999), in his own attempt to circumscribe *Francophonie*, suggests that critics consider several important factors: the multiple identities of the authors; their writing language(s) and those they do not write; how they situate themselves in the world; their attitude toward the concept of nation; and the community or

communities to which they feel they belong. Moura's factors – in particular, those of the languages that the authors speak and/or write and the status of each of these languages – contributed to mapping the corpus for this book.

To discuss about literatures in the plural is an ideological act. It constitutes a first step toward the recognition of the non-uniformity of African literatures[22] and is meant to draw attention to the specificity and individuality of each writing project, and to reject the idea of African literature as a monolith. On the other hand, using the plural of "literatures" risks incurring an unnecessary focus on the fragmentation of those texts.

At the heart of the considerations about languages is the status associated with the authors' mother or native tongue. It would have been perfectly justifiable to focus on sub-Saharan authors, given the richness and variety of these literatures.[23] However, to do so would have implied insisting on the opposition between languages with a strong oral tradition and those with a strong written tradition. Using categories that are too clear-cut would inevitably have led to another kind of debate, namely that of deciding whether the more relevant criterion for inclusion was the nature of the literary heritage or its mode of transmission. As a consequence, selecting my corpus according to geographic borders would have left out other writers from the Maghreb who have strategically and purposefully used sound motifs in a complex context where classical Arabic literature coexists with local oral literatures. One could imagine a debate between proponents of Arabic literature as a primarily written and centuries-old heritage and those who insist on the fact that this heritage was essentially transmitted orally during colonization.[24] Khatibi pointedly remarked that, although Arabic was his native language, he grew up in Morocco without any formal education in written Arabic and hence considered Arabic as an oral heritage (Mehrez 1992). His own writing is a testimony to this chasm between two languages, Arabic, which was transmitted orally to him, and French, the language of his formal education and, later, his own writing (Mehrez 1992). The coexistence of multiple forms of literatures, written and oral, in the Maghreb is an important consideration in the chapter I devote to Assia Djebar. For the moment, it suffices to mention one of Djebar's own statements on the topic:

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22. A review of recent academic publications devoted to African literatures shows a growing trend toward the use of the plural.

23. For a critical discussion on this topic, see Batchelor's analysis of the rationale behind the selection of her own sub-Saharan corpus (2009: 8–13).

24. For a detailed discussion on the coexistence of classical written Arabic literature and Algerian Arabic oral literature and their respective staging by French colonial powers, see Slyomovics 2014.

> [D]ans *L'Amour, la fantasia*, il y a la langue française, mais aussi une force d'appel vers cette richesse symbolique de la langue maternelle non écrite. 'In *L'amour, la fantasia*, there is the French language but also a strong call to the symbolic richness of the non-written mother tongue.' (1997: 32)

The particular experience of Maghrebi writers challenges the often overly simplistic definitions of what constitutes oral literature and invites us to think in terms of transmission, reception, and memory. Maghrebi literature also provides a framework that allows for the establishment of connections with other literary traditions and movements. It is useful to recall that one of the objectives of my research is to challenge the assumptions of translation studies scholars about the concept of orality in African literatures.

10. Corpus presentation

The authors whose texts are examined in this monograph were selected because their writings display identifiable sound motifs. These characteristics have been emphasized by the writers themselves and/or by literary critics and they were confirmed by my initial reading of their works. Although stating this fact may seem to be truistic justification, I do so to preclude any assertion that African literature – used in the singular to reflect an imaginary monolithic entity – would systematically make use of sound motifs or sound play in general. Rather, I aim to emphasize the extent to which sound poetics informed by another literature has been recreated in translation. As such, these texts represent a remarkable opportunity to challenge our assumptions about translation itself and the way we process sound patterns for the purpose of translating them. In other words, the "Africanness" of the selected texts does not constitute an end in itself, even though this dimension is far from being instrumental.[25]

An absolute prerequisite for the selection of texts was the existence of a published translation, either in English for original works published in French, or in French for original works published in English. This was a quite frustrating exercise since a number of original texts made fascinating use of sound motifs but had never been published in translation. An exploration of UNESCO's *Index Translationum*, among other databases, sadly confirms that African literatures remain, more often than not, untranslated. The status of African literatures that Ojo lamented in 1986 still holds true to this day and applies to African literatures written in English and in French:

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25. See Kouadio (2005) for a full discussion on examining African literatures without instrumentalizing them.

> But as at present, not enough has been done to reveal the rich vitality of African literature, through translation. For example, texts written in Spanish and Portuguese have not been very much affected by translation into English and French; so too have very few texts written in English and French managed to cross over to the other two linguistic communities through translation. (Ojo 1986: 299)

Batchelor's thorough survey of all African novels published in French and their English language translations up to 2008 gives a very specific account of the present situation. Among the sixteen countries whose publications were surveyed, her country-by-country breakdown reveals that translation rates ranged from 0 to 12%, with very few countries exceeding 4% (Batchelor 2009: 16–17). The number of Francophone African authors whose entire corpus was translated in English amounts to a dismal total of three: Mariama Bâ, Camara Laye, and Ferdinand Oyono; only Laye benefited from the "privilege" of being published by a single publishing house, the UK-based Fontana Press (Batchelor 2009: 18). The *Grand prix littéraire de l'Afrique noire*, one of the major literary prizes for Francophone literature in sub-Saharan Africa, obviously does not represent a prestigious enough recognition for English-language publishers (we might even question the idea that prizes are considered in the publishers' decision process when it comes to translation.) A good example of questioning the value of literary prizes would be French Guinean writer Tierno Monénembo, who received the *Grand prix littéraire de l'Afrique noire* prize in 1986 for *Les écailles du ciel*, which has not yet been translated.[26] Had there been a translation, this novel would have been valuable to this corpus, since the sound motifs implemented by Monénembo could have been articulated with his native Fulani oral literature, which is known for its sophisticated sonic devices, including alliterations, elaborate sound repetitions, chiasmus, to name merely a few.[27]

Other criteria for inclusion include the geo-linguistic area of the authors and the date of publication of their works. Selecting all the writers from a single geo-linguistic area (i.e. authors sharing the same literary heritage) would have impoverished the discussion, and choosing texts published over too dissimilar time periods would have to some extent weakened the analysis. According to a number of literary and translation scholars (including Gérard 1986, Sévry 1998, Bandia 2008), African writers of French expression – unlike their counterparts writing in English – have long been discouraged from using any form of language creativity under the colonial rule. It seemed therefore more relevant to focus on texts written after independence from the respective former colonies. Focusing on a more recent

26. As of November 2019.

27. On Fulani literature, see Seydou (1991: 21ff).

corpus enables me to analyze a selection of authors and texts that has received less critical attention than authors from the African literary canon.[28]

In practical terms, the selection of texts was divided into the following three stages. First, I identified authors whose writing had been signaled by literary critics and/or the authors themselves as being singular, poetic, and/or playing with language. Secondly, I analyzed the nature of this focus on language and selected texts by those authors who were actually implementing sound motifs in their writing. Thirdly, I researched the oral literatures associated with each of the writers to understand their relationship to that heritage. I want to mention that the impetus for this research came from a previous study on the translation of metaphors in a novel of Nuruddin Farah, which revealed his systematic use of alliteration – a core device in Somali oral literature.

My corpus is comprised of the following texts: *Secrets* by Nuruddin Farah (1998) , translated by Jacqueline Bardolph as *Secrets* (1999); *Le Pays sans ombre* by Abdourahman Ali Waberi (1994), translated by Jeanne Garane as *The Land without Shadows* (2005); *La carte d'identité* by Jean-Marie Adiaffi (1980), translated by Brigitte Katiyo as *The Identity Card* (1983); *Ancestors* by Chenjerai Hove (1996), translated by Jean-Pierre Richard as *Ancêtres* (2002); *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* by Ayi Kwei Armah (1968), translated as *L'Age d'or n'est pas pour demain* by Josette and Robert Mane (1976); *L'Amour, la fantasia* by Assia Djebar (1985), translated by Dorothy Blair as *Fantasia, an Algerian Cavalcade* (1993).[29]

28. Such as Achebe, Soyinka, Laye, and Okara, to name but a few.

29. The dates mentioned here correspond to those of the first edition, which might be different from the ones used in the analysis.

CHAPTER 2

Making sense of an alliterative practice in translation

From resistance to restitution

This first case study focuses on two authors sharing the same native language and literary culture, which is not the case for the authors whose works are examined in the subsequent two chapters. More specifically, I discuss how Nuruddin Farah's writing in *Secrets* (1999, ©1998) relates to specific literary codes borrowed from Somali oral poetics, and how French translator Jacqueline Bardolph embraced this characteristic in her translation (*Secrets* 1999). In the same vein, I examine Abdourahman Ali Waberi's short story collection *Le Pays sans ombre* (2007, ©1994) and its English translation by Jeanne Garane (*The Land without Shadows* 2005).

1. Background matters

Born in 1945 in Baidoa, Somalia, Nurrudin Farah is one of the few authors from the Horn of Africa to benefit from international recognition and to be the recipient of multiple literary awards, including the prestigious Neustadt International Prize for Literature, which he received in 1998. Nuruddin Farah emerged in the seventies after the publication of his first two novels, *From a Crooked Rib* (1970) and *A Naked Needle* (1976). He is the author of three trilogies, starting with *Variations on the Theme of an African Dictatorship* (which includes *Sweet and Sour Milk* (1979), *Sardines* (1981), and *Close Sesame* (1983)), followed by *Blood in the Sun* (*Maps* (1986), *Gifts* (1992), and *Secrets* (1998)), and capped with *Past Imperfect* (*Links* (2004), *Knots* (2007), and *Crossbones* (2011)). His most recent novels, *Hiding in Plain Sight* and *North of Dawn* were published in 2014 and 2018, respectively. His other works include a novel written in Somali,[30] an essay, *Yesterday, Tomorrow: Voices from the Somali Diaspora* (2000), several plays, and numerous articles.[31]

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30. *Tallow Waa Talee Ma*, serialized in 1973 in a Somali government newspaper before being censored. Its integral version has, as of June 2018, not been published in its entirety.

31. For a detailed bibliography of Farah's works up to 1998, see Alden, Tremaine, and Lindfors (1998: 723).

His books have been translated into fifteen languages,[32] with a predominance of German, French, Italian, Swedish, and Arabic translations. A growing number of his novels are also offered as audiobooks (in English, Swedish, and German).[33]

Farah's novels in their original, English-language version were successively published in the United Kingdom, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and the United States. His first two novels were published by Heinemann Educational in the African Writers series (London, UK), and his subsequent ones by Allison & Busby (UK), Graywolf Press (US), Kwela Books (South Africa), Baobab Books (Zimbabwe), Pantheon Books (US), Arcade Publishing (US), and Riverhead Books (US), who published his last six novels. The original edition of *Secrets* (1998) was published by Arcade and reprinted by Penguin Book in 1999, both in the United States. The second edition by Penguin Books is the one I used.

While the first trilogy was translated into French by Christian Surber and published by Swiss publisher Éditions Zoé in a collection titled "*Littératures d'émergence*", Jacqueline Bardolph translated the next trilogy as *Secrets* (1999), *Territoires* (2000), and *Dons* (2002), all of which were published by French publisher Le Serpent à plumes. Created by Pierre Astier, Le Serpent à plumes started in 1998 as a quarterly literary magazine before becoming a publishing house in 1993 with an emphasis on Francophone literature from Africa, the Caribbean, Canada, and France along works in translation, including novels from Africa. The first edition of Waberi's *Le Pays sans ombre* (1994) was also published by Le Serpent à plumes. Le Serpent à plumes was then bought by Le Rocher,[34] who later reprinted Waberi's *Le Pays sans ombre* in its "*Motifs*" collection in 2007, which is the edition used for my analysis.

Bardolph also retranslated *From a Crooked Rib* (*Née de la côte d'Adam* 2000),[35] which had first been translated by Geneviève Jackson and published by French publisher Hatier in 1987. The last of Farah's books to have been translated into French are the novel *Links*, translated by Marie-Odile Fortier-Masek as *Exils* (2010), and his essay, translated by Guillaume Cingal as *Hier, demain. Voix et témoignages de la diaspora somalienne* (2001b), which were both published by Le Serpent à plumes.

Born in Somalia during colonial times, Farah grew up in regions that were constantly being disputed, including Ogaden, which was an area under British control when Farah was growing up before it was handed over to Ethiopia. The different

32. Sources: Index Translationum and Worldcat (accessed June 20, 2018).

33. Details on these, accompanied by an in-depth discussion on audiobooks, will be offered in the last chapter.

34. Since 2013, Le Serpent à plumes is again a self-standing publishing house.

35. This last translation was published posthumously since Bardolph passed away in July 1999.

Somali-speaking regions[36] in the Horn of Africa gained independence at different time periods. While Italy-ruled Somalia, in the south, and British Somaliland, in the north, both gained their independence in 1960, Djibouti,[37] a French colony, did not become independent before 1977. Farah grew up in a multicultural and multilingual environment with Yemenis, Palestinians, and Amhara Ethiopians. While receiving an education in English, he spoke Somali at home and learned Arabic and Amharic with his friends. Farah's father, an interpreter, and mother, an oral poet, contributed to shaping his novelistic signature particularly attuned to oral craft:

> I was a child apart, my parents two wordsmiths, in their different ways, each forging out of the smithy of their souls a creative reckoning of an oral universe.[38] It was in deference to their efforts that I lent a new lease on life later to the tales told to me orally, tales that I worked into my own, all the more to appreciate them.
>
> (Farah 1998a: 710)

More specifically, Farah insists on the role played by his mother, who composed Somali sung poetry *buraambur*[39] for special occasions:

> In an effort to get closer to my mother, or perhaps to bridge a chasm, I learnt as much of the oral tradition as I possibly could. […] I tried my hand at making up my own lyrics in Somali to tunes borrowed from the songs that were popular in those days. (Farah 1998a: 711–712)

In a 1998 interview on French radio channel France Culture, Farah recounted that his inability to meet his mother's expectations, who thought he would become an oral poet like her and her own father, in fact, contributed to shaping his singular writing:

> I received all my inspiration from my mother. […] I thought I should write books that would be considered a tribute to my mother's memory. […] I hope … I think that my work is good enough to serve as eulogy to a mother that I loved.
>
> (Farah 1998b: CD 3)

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36. These regions include Somalia, Somaliland, and Djibouti. Djibouti's official languages are French and Arabic, with French being the language used by its institutions at large. However, Somali speakers are the largest group, followed by Afar speakers, and Yemeni Arabic speakers.

37. A territory under French control, first called *Côte française des Somalis*, then *Territoire français des Afars et des Issas*, before becoming Djibouti.

38. An echo to Joyce's Stephen: "I […] forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (Joyce 2005: 184).

39. Buraambur is a classic genre of Somali poetry. A short poem, generally less complex than other types of poems, it is composed and sung by women for other women, although men can also be part of the audience.

Of particular importance here is to understand the personal and emotional value of oral literature for Farah who, very early on, had access to world literature in translation, either in English or Arabic. He recalls that, as a Somali colonial subject – colonized in a variety of ways – having to access world literature through the prism of other languages did not really pose a problem: "I could read Dostoevsky and Victor Hugo in Arabic" (Farah 1998a: 709). "I remember my first encounter with *A Thousand and One Nights,* and how, reading it in the original, I felt suddenly whole" (710).

Choosing a language of writing was a non-issue for Nuruddin Farah since the Somali language had not been standardized[40] yet when he started writing. In fact, Farah does not refer to his "linguistic schizophrenia" negatively (Farah quoted by Morin 1997: 25), but rather as a form or enrichment that allows him to move effortlessly and seamlessly from oral to written literatures:

> Literature of the written and oral variety became a mansion in which I moved with self-edifying ease, reading books in foreign tongues and listening to the oral wisdom transmitted in Somali. (Farah 1998a: 710)

While Farah's novels, apart from the first one, are unanimously considered modern on various levels and systematically framed by epigraphs from and references to modernists,[41] his writing bears witness to his eclectic inspirations, be they modern and Western, or else conjuring up his Somali oral literary identity.

> The constant invocation of Somali oral poetry in Farah's very modernist novels is significant for two reasons. First, his constant appeal to the authority of oral culture calls attention to the limits of modernism itself in the representation of the labyrinthine world of African politics, a world in which distinctions between literacy and orality are not as clear-cut as they might first appear to be. […] [He] also valued the world of Somali oral culture both as an important source of formal materials for his works and as the possible basis of an identity.
> (Gikandi 1998: 754–755)

Each and every of Farah's novels undisputedly reflects his deep concern with Somalia's politics and social issues. Oppression in all of its imaginable variations, shades, and hues – be they political, patriarchal, social, gender-, clan- or lineage-based – makes up the narrative motif that pervades the first trilogy. On

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40. Standardization became official in 1972 after ten years of heated debates opposing contenders of the Arabic writing system and contenders of a transcription using the Latin alphabet that had been developed by Somali linguist Shire Jama Ahmed. The Parliament finally voted for the latter.

41. *A Naked Needle* is most certainly his most modernist and experimental novel, with countless references to Joyce's Ulysses (Moolla 2014).

a political level, this first installment closely engages with the theme of dictatorship, without explicitly naming that of Mohamed Siad Barre under whose regime Farah's texts were censored and Farah himself banned. The second trilogy, of which *Secrets*, analyzed in this chapter, is a part, departs from Farah's first concerns to cast an intimate look on private life, and more specifically on the complexity of kin and household relationships in Somalia. The central figure of the dictator in the first trilogy is replaced by that of the orphan in the second trilogy – a shift that allows Farah to minutely explore the complicated question of individual identity in a predominantly collective society. The third and last trilogy engages in, from the perspective of the Somali diaspora, a more global reflection on the political, social, and religious chaos and ultimate anarchy in which Somalia is currently engulfed.[42]

Literary connections between Nuruddin Farah and his Djiboutian fellow writer Abdourahman Ali Waberi can be established on multiple accounts. A long-standing admirer of Farah on whose works he wrote his thesis,[43] Abdourahman Ali Waberi shares the same Somali oral heritage, which nurtures his stylistic exuberance. Waberi's modernist writing builds on the imaginary and stylistic devices of his native oral culture in terms of style, images, symbols, alliterations, and metaphors (Miampika 1998: 1). Born in 1965, 20 years after Farah, in Djibouti, Waberi's award-winning[44] literary career took him from Djibouti, to France, and the United States. His preferred mode of literary expression is short texts, namely poems and short stories, a preference that he depicts in those terms: "I believe in more rapid strokes and in concision, not seven-hundred-page novels with well-depicted characters" (Waberi quoted by Farah in Garane 2005: ix). Waberi also authored several novels, including *Balbala* (1997), *Transit* (2003a), *Aux États-Unis d'Afrique* (2006), *Passage des larmes* (2009), and *La divine chanson* (2015). It is useful to recall Waberi's indifference to genre labeling in particular, and, more generally, the complicated relationship harbored by many African writers regarding the notion of genre as constructed by Western standards, as discussed in Chapter 1. Waberi's first two collections of short stories, or short texts as he prefers to call them, were respectively published in 1994 (*Le Pays sans ombre*) and 1996 (*Cahier nomade*) as part of a trilogy titled *Tentative de définition de Djibouti* whose last installment is *Balbala* (1997). Self-standing texts include the collection of poems *Les nomades, mes frères, vont boire à la Grande Ourse: 1991–1998* (2000a), a narrative essay in memory

42. For an exhaustive and recent analysis on the complete works of Nuruddin Farah, see Moolla's essay, *Reading Nuruddin Farah* (2014), and its review (Jay-Rayon 2015).

43. "Politique de l'espace et politique dans la fiction de Nuruddin Farah" (1993).

44. Grand prix littéraire de l'Afrique noire (1996) and numerous writer's residencies, including the Villa Medici's.

of Rwanda's genocide titled *Moisson de crânes, textes pour le Rwanda* (2000b),[45] and the short story / short text collection *Rift, Routes, Rails: variations romanesques* (2001). His most recent publications include a novel, *La divine chanson* (2015), and a collection of poems, *Mon nom est aube* (2016). Waberi also authored numerous articles as a literary critic, and was one of the forty-four signatories of the 2007 "Manifeste des 44 pour une Littérature-Monde en français", an initiative aiming at bringing closure to the qualifiers "Francophonie" and "Francophone", and offering the more fitting descriptor of World literature in French, which "focuses on the choice of language for literary expression and its interplay with other linguistic, cultural, and stylistic influences" (Duton 2016: 404).

Le Pays sans ombre, examined in this chapter, received the Grand Prix de la nouvelle francophone de l'Académie royale de langue et littérature françaises de Belgique as well as the Prix Albert Bernard de l'Académie des sciences d'outre-mer (a prize awarded to African writers, and more specifically to those from the Horn of Africa). His books have been translated into a dozen languages, including American English, Italian, and German. Jeanne Garane is the American translator of *Le Pays sans ombre*, published in 2005 as *The Land without Shadows* in the University of Virginia Press's CARAF Books Series (Caribbean and African Literature translated from the French).

Nicole and David Ball translated the three subsequent novels as *In the United States of Africa* (2009), *Passage of Tears* (2011), and *Transit* (2012). Nancy Naomi Carlson translated his two volumes of poetry as *The Nomads, My Brothers, Go Out to Drink from the Big Dipper* (2015), and *Naming the Dawn* (2018), respectively. Five of the short stories that make up *Le Pays sans ombre* had previously been translated into English and published in journals or anthologies between 1992 and 2004. These earlier translations are helpful to put Garane's own translation into perspective and are the focus of the penultimate section of the present chapter. A closer examination of Bardolph's and Garane's backgrounds, publications, and translations offers a first set of clues that help frame their respective translation projects.

Jacqueline Bardolph and Jeanne Garane share a similar academic profile. Jacqueline Bardolph was a professor of Anglophone literatures at the Université de Nice from 1975 until her retirement in 1998. Her research focused on postcolonial English literatures in general with a specific expertise on East African novelists, and she chaired the Société d' Étude des Pays du Commonwealth for several years. Her publications include seminal works on East African novels and an essay on Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. Bardolph devoted specific attention to Nuruddin Farah and authored

45. Waberi's is one of the ten texts written as part of the 1998 writer's residency project "Rwanda, Ecrire par devoir de mémoire" ('Writing Genocide into Memory') initiated by Nocky Djedamoum and Maïmouna Coulibaly.

five articles in which she framed the subtexts of his respective novels: politics and feminism (Bardolph 1996), history (Bardolph 1988), dream and identity (Bardolph 1998a), and kinship relations (Bardolph 1998b). Her last article (Bardolph 2000) offers a comprehensive discussion of the issues developed in Farah's novels published up until 1999. While Bardolph does not altogether ignore the issue of style, namely his indebtedness to Somali oral poetics, as evidenced by the excerpt from one of her articles below, it seems that she did not consider it as central to Farah's writing, or that it came as an afterthought:[46]

> Another characteristic of his production is the sheer skill of the writing. The craft of storytelling is mastered and even foregrounded in the display of a wide range of technical devices that change totally from book to book. […] In a sophisticated system of collage, he displays a plurality of texts: folk tales, articles, prose poetry, Quranic verses. The blend is at times incongruous: one may prefer the uneven disturbing texture of the first trilogy to the smoother polyphony of the second, yet once again this contemporary technique is no futile display but a re-creation of the mixed narratives of present-day Africa. […] Like the learned poets of Somali oral tradition, he uses stylistic ornaments, comparisons of all types, sometimes incongruous or comic, sometimes of an amazing poetic precision. […] Like Somali poetry, their tone can be in turn humorous, sarcastic; their mode is at once sensuous, political, mythical. (Bardolph 2000: 120–121)

Bardolph's research was not steeped in a translation studies framework. While her translations include some academic publications, she mostly focused on Farah's novels with a total of four translations, including the retranslation of *A Naked Needle*. There is no introduction or foreword to frame her translations of Farah, which means that her approach to translation can only be inferred from the analysis of her translations, and, to some extent, her academic publications.

Jeanne Garane is a professor of French and Comparative Literature at the University of South Carolina whose research focuses on 20th-century Francophone literatures. Her academic publications devoted to Waberi include a paper presentation (1999), an article (2003), her introduction to *The Land without Shadows* (2005) and a book chapter (2005b). Garane is Waberi's first English-language translator:[47] before *The Land without Shadows*, she translated three of his other short stories, published respectively in *Adpf* (Waberi 2002), *Renaissance Noire/Black Renaissance* (Waberi 2003b), and *WorldView Magazine* (Waberi 2003c). Like Bardolph's, Garane's research is centered on postcolonial writers, and her particular focus is on

46. The latter theory is supported by the fact that her preoccupation with Farah's style emerged in her last paper, which was published posthumously.

47. Book-length translation.

Francophone writers from Africa and the Caribbean. Beyond her specific concern for feminism and space, she also published articles on African oral tradition (1998), urban oral art in West African film (2001), translation (2005) and the role of African interpreters (2015). To understand her translation project, it is best to turn to her paper titled "'Nomad's Land': Abdourahman Waberi's Djibouti" (2003) in which she situates Waberi's writing within his Somali oral heritage, and her 21-page introduction to *The Land without Shadows* whose epigraph by Waberi, "I still traffic in poetic material", summarizes unequivocally how Garane relates to Waberi's signature:

> Waberi's prose is indeed "poetic", with its erudite vocabulary, frequent use of metaphor, alliteration (the repetition of initial consonant sounds), assonance (repetition of vowels), and predilection for puns. (2003: xxi)

One needs to mention that CARAF Books, the University of Virginia Press' series in which Garane's translation was published, allows translators to frame their translation project in the form of introductions, forewords, and/or glossaries, a much-needed space offered by university presses to counter the invisibility[48] of translation and translators.

2. Digest of Somali oral literature

To talk about Somali oral literature amounts to talking about its poetry. Somali poetry is a versed poetry composed by pastoral nomads. During the rainy season, which offers a welcome respite from the hardships brought about by the dry season, nomads turn to their favorite activity: alliterative poetry (Andrzejewski 2011). Ruled by strict formal constraints, poetry plays a central role in Somali society and represents its main cultural achievement. Every member of the Somali community dreams about possessing the rhetorical talents required to compose a poem (Andrzejewski and Lewis 1964, Andrzejewski 2011). Somali oral literature scholars unanimously insist on its formal rules, namely those of alliteration and scansion (Andrzejewski and Lewis 1964, Said S. Samatar 1982, Andrzejewski 1983, Johnson 1988, Andrzejewski and Andrzejewski 1993, Andrzejewski 2011). Experts claim that Somali alliterative art goes back centuries: it is also found in proverbs, invocations and benedictions (Andrzejewski 1983). "The most striking feature of Somali poetry, which can be noticed even by a person who does not know the language, is its alliteration, called in Somali higgaad[49]" (Andrzejewski and Lewis

48. For a full discussion on the invisibility of translation, see Venuti (1995 and 1998).

49. *Higgaad* is also transcribed as *hikaad* (see Said S. Samatar 1982).

1964: 42). This art is to be understood in its broader sense and includes repetitions of consonants (alliterations) and vowels (assonances), although the rule pertaining to consonants is by far stricter than the one pertaining to vowels. As a matter of fact, the alliterative rule in traditional poetry requires that the same alliteration be used throughout the entire poem, which is no small feat in a 200-verse poem: "A poet, therefore, in his eternal search for alliterative sounds is tempted to go on an endless journey of word-hunting" (Samatar 1982: 60–61) and the alliterative constraint often takes poets toward purely sonic chains, which can induce unexpected cognitive associations (Andrzejewski and Lewis 1964: 43). While Waberi criticizes these composition rules as dictatorial, he also claims that anyone exploring the culture of the Somalis needs to study its poetry – an unavoidable exercise in style to understand its core role in Somali society (Waberi 1996: 1–2).

Additional composition rules include metrics, whose workings were simultaneously uncovered in the seventies by two Somali diaspora scholars, Cabdillaahi Diiriye Guuleed and Maxamed Xaashi Dhamac (known as "Gaariye"), who both claimed ownership of the findings. The unit of time ruling Somali verse, called "more", pertains to the length of syllables, with one "more" for short syllables and two "mores" for long ones (as in *higg**aad***). Further to this initial discovery, Johnson and Barker showed that metrics was further complicated by the fact that most poems are often sung[50] (in Andrzejewski and Andrzejewski 1993: 104). Somali poetry, which was for centuries a purely oral art form (orally composed, memorized and recited), has been laid down in written form only after the advent of a Somali language written script in 1972. Its oral status, however, experienced a Renaissance first through the circulation of audiotapes,[51] and then through the advent of television and videotapes, both extraordinary modern vectors of memorization and transmission. As suggested by Waberi (1996: 2), talking about technorality[52] when referring to Somali modern oral culture is appropriate.

Poetry has many uses within Somali society and can hardly be dissociated from social and political life: among many other uses, it functions as a running commentary on the news and is used as an effective lobbying tool in socio-political debates and the recording of historical events (Johnson 1974: 1). This use of poetic art as social or political criticism is evidenced in both Farah's and Waberi's texts, which gravitate around the topics of dictatorship, corruption, and clannism, among other contemporary plagues in their respective communities. The history of Somali

50. For a full analysis of metrics and scansion in Somali poetry, see Johnson (1988); for a detailed exploration of alliteration and scansion, see Andrzejewski (1983).

51. Ali Djimale Ahmed qualified Somali society as "cassette-culture" (1996).

52. Technorality is a portmanteau word referring to technology-mediated orality.

political poetic art goes back to a long tradition of panegyric and invectives. Its practice intensified in the aftermath of WWII as a rhetorical device to support, like in other African countries, emancipation movements, and modern-day Somali poets and singers often play the role of mediators in social conflicts (Waberi 1996: 4).

What is particularly relevant here is that Somali poetry represents the perfect example for highlighting how the intensification of language serves as an instrument for foregrounding social and political concerns, in other words the "message" ("information" as per Frye's terminology [1957]). As an added consequence, it seems rather futile to treat "poetic texts" and "political texts" separately or to consider poetic features divorced from the topics they are meant to serve.

3. From *Membranes of Maternity* to *Lauralité-Sur-Lécry*[53]

While alliterative prose is visible in Farah's early works, poetic passages in his subsequent novels are not isolated anymore but embedded in the narrative or dialogues. Through alliterations, the text transcends fictional boundaries to reach an expressive dimension that can be qualified as "music of words": by becoming musical, the text seeks to mean differently, and alliterations might partly explain the use of a very complex lexicon in Farah's novels (Cingal 2001).

This particular sonic style is further reinforced by numerous references to music in the first trilogies and the role played by oral transmission in the form of audio recordings in both *Close Sesame* and *Sardines,* and radio broadcasting in *Close Sesame*, with Radio Mogadishu playing the exact same song on execution days. In *Secrets*, the audible is this time staged in a way that hints at speech, voices and regional accents. Nonno, the grandfather of main character Kalaman recovers his home-town accent on the eve of his death, to Kalaman's surprise:

> He talks. I listen. His voice, however, hasn't a bounce to it, more like a plank of wood that has been in the rain all day. There is no resonance to it, only thuds flat. His stare is as soft as sawdust. It is as if Berbera, the Somali coastal city of his birth, has somehow insinuated itself into him, causing the natural flair of the southern lilt, which he has picked up, to vanish in a vaporous denial. (*Secrets*: 289)

53. This title is a reference to Cingal's paper devoted to Farah ("The membranes of maternity": fonctions de l'allitération dans les romans de Nuruddin Farah" 2001) and to Lauralité-sur-Lécry, Waberi's pun transcription of L'oralité-sur-l'écrit (Orality-upon-Written) found in an interview that he gave to French magazine *Le Nouvel Observateur*: "J'habite toujours, comme d'autres, à Lauralité-sur-Lécry" (quoted in Garane 2003: 106).

Speech impediments of all sorts, starting with the unintelligible grunts of Yaqut (Kalaman's father), which he compensates with his ability to play music and compose songs, are reverberated throughout *Secrets*. Speech obstructions are most explicitly illustrated in Kalaman's nervous stuttering, namely when he faces his former playmate and lover Sholoongo. Upon their unexpected reunion, Kalaman panics to get his tongue obey him: "My tongue rubbed itself against my fricative palate without stumbling on any of the consonants" (*Secrets*: 31), "A fresh fit of panic took a tighter grip of me, the moment the words left my lips" (33). The tongue twisters punctuating *Secrets* can be read in many different ways, including as an invitation for the readers to join in Kalaman's many speech impairments: "Reduced to a flutter, I stared tongue-tied and in dumbfounded frustration" (33). Kalaman's voice acts as his emotional barometer whereas the voice of dangerous Sholoongo is depicted in a way that reflects her personality: "It had a metallic edge to it, as if somewhere inside it half a razor blade had been buried" (33). In the following passage in which Kalaman's cleaning lady Lambar addresses him, Kalaman is suddenly unable to perceive the sound of her voice: "Her lips moved. If they managed to formulate the faintest of sounds, I didn't hear what she said." (27). Kalaman's disorders, mostly pertaining to the senses of speaking and hearing – to which a growing olfactory disturbance adds itself – end up triggering a full-blown physical allergic reaction.

Farah's staging of the five senses in *Secrets* is difficult to ignore,[54] and yet it is clearly sound that plays the most important role both on the narrative and poetic levels. From a purely stylistic point of view, *Secrets* represents Farah's utmost achievement in terms of alliterative prose, experimenting on the lexical, rhythmic, and stylistic levels (Cingal 2001: 92). Farah's alliterative patterns in *Secrets* bear witness to a rare craft: beyond simple alliterations, he goes as far as alternating alliterating consonants, crossing them and even organizing them in pairs or triads. Another pattern implemented in the novel is paronomasia, which is the stylistic device that best combines binary rhythm[55] and sound play (Cingal 2001: 96). In *Secrets*:

> Farah pousse le recours aux formes allitératives à son paroxysme ; l'allitération parcourt le roman ; la musique des mots envahit l'ensemble de la diégèse (description, récit, dialogues). […] Enfin – et ce n'est pas la moindre des choses dans une œuvre concertée où le moindre détail est signifiant, où tout donne matière à interprétation – la musique engendre le sens : l'allitération correspond à un certain sens de la formule, à une mise en œuvre du projet fictionnel. 'Farah pushes alliterative forms to the limit; alliterations run through the novel; the music of words pervades

54. The sense of taste comes into play at the very beginning of the novel, and that of touch in the twelfth and last chapter.

55. In his article, Cingal makes an explicit reference to binary rhythm in Somali pastoral oral poetry, namely in the *gabay* genre (p. 96).

> the entire diegesis (description, narration, and dialogues). […] Last but not least, especially in a work in which every detail is significant and everything is subject to interpretation, music creates meaning: alliterations point to a specific sensitivity to formula and the implementation of the fictional project.'
>
> (Cingal 2001: 100–101)

Although, to my knowledge, no one has dedicated this type of detailed analysis to any of Waberi's works, critics systematically describe his writing as highly poetic. In her 2013 article titled "'Nomad's Land': Abdourahman Waberi's Djibouti", Garane gives an explicit account of Waberi's indebtedness to his Somali literary heritage:

> While narrative prose dominates Waberi's recounting of Djibouti from a Djiboutian point of view, it nevertheless calls on an indigenous literary tradition that elevates poetry to the highest standing, for the Somali language is "rich in poets and poetesses" (*Balbala* 13). […] In writing poetic prose that seeks to resist the "immense collective suicide brought on by the … cities," Waberi's writings continue the Somali poetic tradition, although fragmented in form […] and thus in transgression of the traditional Somali gabay's strict compositional rules.[56]
>
> (Garane 2003: 111–112)

Waberi himself regularly insists on his sources of inspiration, globally referring to his texts as belonging to the "poetic niche":

> Si le qualificatif de « poétique » revient très souvent sous la plume des critiques qui se penchent sur mes écrits, je n'en tire ni étonnement, ni fierté car le souci poétique doit faire partie de l'arsenal ou du dispositif de tout écrivain un brin soucieux des questions formelles. 'Whereas critics more often than not qualify my writings as "poetic", I am neither surprised nor proud for poetics must be an integral part of the arsenal or tool box of any writer a bit concerned with formal issues.'
>
> (Waberi 2003: 935)

The political and social criticism that forms the thrust of Waberi's texts are perfectly coherent with his conception of the role of poets, seen as enlightened members of a society whose moral conscience they represent. The poet:

> [R]écompense les vertueux […] et punit à sa manière les oppresseurs, les déloyaux, les voleurs, les tricheurs, les arrivistes et, *last but not least*, les tribalistes.
>
> (*Le Pays sans ombre*: 26–27)

> [R]ewards the virtuous […] and he punishes in his own way the malevolent, the vain, the oppressors, the disloyal, the thieves, the cheats, the overly ambitious, and, last but not least, the tribalists. (*The Land without Shadows*: 16)

56. The *gabay* is a major (albeit declining) genre of Somali oral poetry, in which the alliterative rule is most strictly applied (Waberi 1996).

In her 2000 review of Waberi's first trilogy, French literature scholar Claire L. Dehon qualifies *Le Pays sans ombre* and *Cahier nomades* as prose poems, and *Balbala*, the last volume of the trilogy, as poetic prose[57] (Dehon 2000: 599), whereas French writer and literary journalist Tirthankar Chanda ventures into the terrain of generic transgression to propose "fiction poetry" in an explicit reference to *Rift, Routes, Rails*, which he characterizes as contravening (Western) traditional genre boundaries (Chanda 2001). According to Dehon, *Le Pays sans ombre* is characterized by rare words, neologisms, unexpected expressions and poems in Somali, which are meant to "ornate" his short texts (2000: 599). In both *Le Pays sans ombre* and *Cahiers nomades*, Waberi uses a language that reminds of Rimbaud as well as James Joyce and his "stream of consciousness" for his ability to shift from one topic to the other as if guided by a fantasy of words rather than the development of a plot (Dehon 2000: 600).

4. Methodology: A cross-corpus analysis

Before examining the analysis of selected samples from *Secrets*, *Le Pays sans ombre* (henceforth *Pays*), and their respective translations, it is useful to introduce the methodology implemented for analyzing the corpus. Drawing on translation studies scholar Jacqueline Henry's remarks pertaining to the translation of sound plays (2003), according to which such plays cannot be systematically recreated in the exact same passages, I chose to read and analyze each text and its translation separately in the first instance. During the first stage of the analysis, I read the original to identify its sound motif and the different sound patterns implemented in the text. During the second stage, I looked for occurrences of the identified sound patterns in the source text and its translation through separate readings.

The following definition of alliteration provides a useful basis for discussing the perception of sound patterns in general. Stylistics and translation scholar Christine Klein-Lataud explains that each language is associated with a given average rate of recurring phonemes. When, for instance, specific consonants exceed a certain redundancy rate, a phenomenon occurs that is called alliterations (Klein-Lataud 2001: 24). This focus on redundancy rate does not, however, enjoy consensus, depending on whether scholars have a background in linguistics or poetics. Poetics scholars are more prone to disregard statistics and focus on the significance of alliterations and their ability to create chains of meaning. In my own analysis, the

57. Within Western genres, prose poems are short texts, a characteristic that does not apply to *Balbala*.

point is not to determine whether specific phonemes exceed the average redundancy rate in a specific language.

My approach to detecting specific sound patterns is more akin to that of stylistics scholar Viprey (2000) who suggests that alliterations need to be significant in terms of pointing to both the reader's ability to perceive them and their value within a critical reading. Whereas perception is subjective and depends on the agent who is reading or translating the text,[58] it can be safely said that translators are super-readers able to detect patterns in text. Viprey underscores this very concept of super-readers (*archilecteurs*) and suggests that attentive readers, and more specifically critical readers, are capable of detecting relevant saliences in a text, especially if these saliences are pertinent in a given passage (Viprey 2000: 8).

Using software to detect sound patterns did not seem an appropriate way of approaching the corpus analysis for the simple reason that no translator would approach a text in that way. Sound patterns were hence considered significant whenever I was able to directly perceive them through careful reading. The unavoidable subjective nature linked to my own perception was attenuated by the fact that I read and analyzed all the texts in the corpus myself. Any unconscious filter potentially applied to a particular text is bound to have been applied to all the others. In terms of selection criteria, again, different scenarios could have been considered. One way of selecting occurrences was to adopt a strictly quantitative approach, which would have meant to select, for instance, only alliterations with at least a specific number of occurrences in a passage (i.e., at least the three same consonants in three successive words). Yet scholars cannot agree on specific factors to determine what constitutes an alliterative string.[59] As I progressed through the analysis, it appeared that many interesting examples would have been excluded if I had applied a strictly quantitative method. My approach was hence that of a super-reader/*archilectrice* systematically selecting all occurrences of specific sound patterns or sonic organization perceptible through an attentive and critical reading as suggested by Viprey (2000). Occurrences were selected at the level of a sentence, passage, or entire paragraph, as long as the same category of sound pattern was perceptible. If a sentence, passage, or paragraph was marked by multiple alliterations, (in [b] and [s], for instance), I recorded one alliterative occurrence. If the same sentence, passage, or paragraph displayed additional sound patterns, such as paronomasia or internal

58. This notion of subjectivity echoes that of translators in general. In *Le conflit des énonciations*, Folkart (1999) discusses the many individual filters that come into play during the interpreting process. My corpus analysis shows exactly that: how individual translators perceive (or not) and recreate (or not) sound motifs.

59. See Viprey (2000) for a full discussion.

rhymes for example, I recorded one instance of paronomasia or internal rhymes. This systematic recording allowed for sketching a sonic landscape of each text.

In Farah's and Waberi's texts, I identified the following patterns: alliterations and assonances, paronomasia and phonic chiasmus, rhymes, tongue twisters, repetitions, and puns. In an earlier section, I pointed out that alliterations and assonances are not clearly distinguished in Somali poetry, although the alliterative rule pertaining to consonants is by far stricter. By standard Western conventions, alliterations are defined as the repetition of (mostly yet not exclusively[60]) initial consonants. By the same standards, assonances are defined as the repetition of vowels, regardless of their location in the word, such as the sound [u] in the following line by Lamartine "Ainsi, t**ou**j**ou**rs p**ou**ssés par de n**ou**veaux rivages" (quoted in Klein-Lataud 2001: 26). Rhymes are generally applied to poetry and defined as a sound similarity of the last accented vowel or syllable in a verse. At first sight, it may seem incongruous to refer to rhymes in non-versified texts, and it is actually more appropriate to use the terminology of internal rhyme, also called homeoteleuton, which refers to words with similar endings, as in this example by Queneau: "Un jour de canic**ule** sur un véhic**ule** où je circ**ule**, gestic**ule** un funamb**ule** au b**ul**be minusc**ule**, à la mandib**ule** en virg**ule** et au capit**ule** ridic**ule**" (1999: 35). These three groups of sound patterns (alliterations, assonances, and internal rhymes) rely on the repetition of the same phonemes. The other categories that were identified in Farah's and Waberi's texts, namely paronomasia, phonic chiasmus, tongue twisters, and puns, rely on the combination of sounds. Paronomasia represents the category that creates the strongest referential connections since the sound similarity this device relies on closely brings together strings of words or expressions that are different in terms of meaning, such as Saint-John Perse's "*l'horreur de vivre*/*l'honneur de vivre*" (quoted in Klein-Lataud 2001: 28). Phonic chiasmus, a subgroup of paronomasia, consists in inverting phonemes, which produces an echo effect, as exemplified by this passage from *Secrets*: "which floated with ash as well as **stub**bed cigarette **butts**. My mother's huff-snuff[61] had its advantages" (148). Tongue twisters are often the results of these combined devices, especially phonic chiasmus and paronomasia, a phenomenon easily confirmed by a reading aloud of the above example from *Secrets*. The last two categories, namely repetitions and puns, do not need to be illustrated for now. It suffices to say that they do not represent significant categories in Farah's *Secrets*, yet appear now and then in Waberi's *Pays*.

60. Internal alliterations are recognized and discussed in academic literature.

61. "Huff-snuff" is an illustration of paronomasia.

5. Farah's alliterative project and its reconstruction in French

Tables 1 and 2 present the sonic landscapes in Farah's *Secrets* and Bardolph's translation, respectively. The data was obtained through independent readings of each text and systematic recording of their respective sound patterns.

Table 1. Recording of sound patterns in Farah's *Secrets*

Alliterations[62] and assonances	488
Paronomasia and phonic chiasmus	151
Internal rhymes	69
Tongue twisters	39
Repetitions	13
Puns	5

Table 2. Recording of sound patterns in *Secrets* (trans. by Bardolph)

Alliterations and assonances	156
Paronomasia and phonic chiasmus	22
Internal rhymes	21
Tongue twisters	12
Repetitions	3
Puns	1

Table 3 shows the percentage of re-creation of each of those categories in Bardolph's translation.

Table 3. Re-creation of sound patterns by Bardolph

Alliterations and assonances	32%
Paronomasia and phonic chiasmus	15%
Internal rhymes	30%
Tongue twisters	31%
Repetitions	23%
Puns	20%

It will be more fruitful to comment on the above data once I have presented the data pertaining to Waberi's *Pays* and Garane's translation given that the aim of this research is not only to discuss originals and their translation, but also – and much more interestingly – different translatorial attitudes. A first set of immediate

62. While assonances have been recorded with alliterations, assonances rarely occurred as a self-standing device. Rather, they are an occasional companion to alliterations.

comments are nonetheless called upon: inarguably, Bardolph was very reserved in her re-creation of sound patterns, even as far as alliterations are concerned, which are Farah's hallmark. Whereas alliterations and assonances have been recorded as one category, alliterations are the predominant motif in Farah's *Secrets*.

The examples shown below, excerpted from the original, illustrate various categories of sound patterns.

> We fell under the **s**pell of **s**ilence that had **s**omething of a hi**ss**ing quality to it, a **s**ound not too di**ss**imilar to that of a **s**nake moving over wet gra**ss**. (*Secrets*: 4)

This first excerpt calls for a Cratylian interpretation, after the definition proposed by Fraser (2007), which suggests that the text be approached as fundamentally united in its sonic dimension and conventional sense. The alliterative chain based on [s]s echoes the hissing of the snake referred to. A few pages later, the same Cratylian association is staged in a series of passages referring to bees, starting with "unpacified anxieties buzzing inside it, like angry bees" (12). As in the previous excerpt, alternating [b]s and [z] sounds evoke the buzzing of the bees, and the same Cratylian technique is activated again in "**ba**b**y** **b**ee" and "**b**ee **b**eam**s** with delight" (151), as well as in "could it have **b**een a **b**ee **b**ehaving" (279). In another passage, the buzzing of the bee adds to yet another fusion of sound and image (melopoeia and phanopoeia, in Pound's terms) in which the sound patterns of the sentence mimic the pecking of the bird:

> The journey **b**etween the **b**ee in the **d**ream and the **b**ird pecking Morse **d**ots and **d**ashes of un**d**eco**d**e**d** mysteries was shorter than the **d**istance which separates illusion from reality. (158)

As is often the case, various techniques are implemented in the above passage: not only do the alternating [b]s, [d]s, and [p]s produce an alliterative chain and pecking rhythm, but internal rhymes in [ē] create another string of associations (*betwe**e**n, b**e**e, dre**a**m, myster**ie**s, reali**t**y*). Further occurrences in the Cratylian category include "**b**eing a worry pot, **b**u**bbl**y and **b**ursting with aqueous energy" (12), where [b]s and [bl]s activate a mental image of bubbling water, and "He looks a **g**reat deal young**e**r than eighty-three, and **g**oing strong**e**r, with a **g**reat deal of spri**n**g in his **g**ait" (33) whose seven alliterating [g]s create a regular rhythm in the sentence and brings out the spring in the gait of elder Nonno. The above two passages, remarkable for their evocative force, would have gained a lot from a Cratylian translation, which is absent from the following renderings by Bardolph:

> [C]ar elle était une marmite bouillonnante de soucis, toujours prête à déborder d'énergie liquide. (28)

> Il ne fait pas du tout ses quatre-vingt-trois ans, et il est plus vigoureux tous les jours, avec encore beaucoup de ressort dans sa démarche. (57)

The next examples from *Secrets* illustrate various alliterative arrangements that do not call upon phonetic symbolism. In the example below, the alliterative chain, albeit extensively developed over multiple consonants, was recorded as one occurrence of alliteration, as explained earlier in the section devoted to methodology. However, it also counts as an occurrence of tongue twister, which arises in the second half of the sentence, starting with "bursts":

> There was no need to en**g**age in a whispered **c**onference anymore: my **g**uest's **c**omposite face **c**alled on my **c**onsciousness in **b**ursts **b**right as shafts of lightnin**g**, in fits and spasms intimidating as doors opening in the s**q**uea**k**y dark of a Hitch**co**c**k** horror film. (29)

Farah often creates alliterative strings with different consonants arranged in sophisticated combinations, which, in turn, generate other patterns such as tongue twisters (second example below) and paronomasia (third example bringing "susurratory" and "structure" together):

> **S**h**e** is **f**un, **S**holoongo is. **S**h**e** is great **f**un. (9)
>
> He is **r**iding a **r**obe **d**ipped in **d**ull red acacia-bark **d**ye and is ri**d**ing a **s**tallion of **s**terling hands**o**mene**ss**. (40)
>
> I was under the **s**pell of termite**s**, moving in their **s**usurratory **ded**ication to **d**emolish **s**tructures. (272)

At times, the alliterative effect is obtained with a single consonant:

> I **r**ummaged through the **r**ecesses of these **r**ecollections. Too emba**rr**assed to **r**ecall them […]. (31)
>
> This way **f**aces emerge, of owls with eyes **f**orever shut, or **f**ishes with their mouth open and **f**eeding. (36)
>
> For the **genius** in your **g**ender, my handsome **genie**. (36)
>
> [A]s if his **t**ongue had been **t**urned into a **t**angle of thorns. (109)

Other categories of sound patterns, even when implemented to a lesser degree, are at least as interesting in terms of sonic architecture. Paronomastic creations encompass a number of elaborate constructions, namely:

> [**M**]**ean men** bad**mou**thing a **woman w**hom they called a **bitch**, **witch**, a **w**hore. (55)
>
> I hoped the dog would worry the **p**oultry to **fright** and the **p**igeon to **flight.** (71)
>
> Unless we **freed** him **fr**om the **thread** of his enslavement. (156)
>
> The Shabelle River wore a **jaw**-fallen expression, like a **boy** deprived of the **joy** of play. (193)

The first of the above examples is, without doubt, the richest, both in terms of sonic architecture and the connotations it conveys by bringing together words that share phonemic proximity: a culminating effect enfolds from the sheer concentration of paronomastic and alliterative chains. The last example is noteworthy for its particular arrangement whose sound axis, "joy", connects both "boy" and "jaw".

A less complex category, internal rhymes (homeoteleutons) characterize a specific kind of assonances that are made more noticeable by their position at the end of words:

> I indulged my smoker's appet**ite** in qu**iet** as I dr**agged** on my f**ag.** (109)
>
> Sholoongo as a mistr**ess** of las**civious** wantonn**ess.** (46)
>
> Fidow, blood all ov**er**, bones and flesh ascatt**er**, and none of us the wis**er**. (144)

Like other categories, they are often combined with other sound patterns, as best exemplified in the last excerpt that adds paronomasia and alliterations to internal rhymes. As a general rule, the sound patterns in *Secrets* are rarely implemented as isolated categories; rather, they are combined to produce what Cingal (2001: 100) terms "*une musique des mots*"/'a music of words' which creates another layer of meaning – and one that is extremely difficult to ignore at that.

The following excerpts are taken from Bardolph's translation and analyzed using the same methodology. As mentioned earlier, the recording of occurrences of sound patterns in the translation was obtained through a separate reading independent from an examination of the original so as to capture the translator's own sonic landscape.

> Nonno et moi **é**coutâmes un petit groupe d'étourneaux qui **c**ommuni**qu**aient entre eux avec des **c**oassements liquides, des sifflements **c**olorés. (18–19)
>
> Ma mère **s**oupçonnait les autres de vouloir **s**aper **s**ubrepticement **s**on influen**c**e **s**ur moi, **s**on fils unique. (28)
>
> Il est remplac**é** par un arc-en-**c**iel, et **s**ur **s**es talons, apparemment fas**c**inés, des envols de **s**able **s**'élèvent vers le **s**oleil et surgit un t**s**unami de **s**ecou**ss**es **s**ismiques, de **s**imples vagues […]. (138)

These first examples illustrate alliterations, in [k] and [s], respectively. The last one is particularly well developed and is at par with Farah's own alliterative frenzy.

The additional excerpts below illustrate combinations of different categories of sound patterns. While the first one conjugates alliterations in [f] and [s] to internal rhymes in [e], the second excerpt associates a dense series of alliterative [k]s with a paronomastic play on "*encourir*" and "*courroux*" – both words that also participate in the alliterative chain.

> […] où un **s**ecret en**f**oui au **f**in **f**ond de mémoires non **s**ollicit**é**e**s** peut nous a**ss**ign**er** telle ou telle position dans la so**c**i**é**t**é**. (70)

> **Q**u'a-t-elle donc fait pour **encourir** ton **courroux ? Q**u'est-ce **q**ue tu me **c**aches ? (211)

A similar combination, this time of paronomasia bringing together "*allumais*" and *"inhalais"* as chronological steps of the same smoking event, and internal rhymes in [ɛ], is shown in this short sentence:

> J'**allumais** à la cha**î**ne des cigar**e**ttes que j'**inhalais**. (213)

In the following excerpt, which illustrates a typical instance of Cratylian relation in which the text echoes what the text refers to, the translation is presented side by side with the original. The sentences, both in the original and the translation, deploy a carefully crafted sound structure:

> Le **t**raj**e**t entre l'ab**ei**lle du r**ê**ve et l'oiseau **t**apot**a**nt les points et les **t**raits d'un **m**essage **m**orse **m**ystérieux et indécodable était plus court que la distance qui sépare l'illusion de la réalité. (238)

> The journey **b**etween the **b**ee in the **d**ream and the **b**ird pecking Morse **d**ots and **d**ashes of un**d**eco**d**e**d** mysteries was shorter than the **d**istance which separates illusion from reality. (158)

Sonic effects do not need to be implemented in long passages to be noticed. They are much easier to perceive in short clauses such as the following ones, whose shortness brings out internal rhymes in [e] in the first example, and crossed alliterations in [s] and [ʃ] in a tongue-twisting fashion in the second example:

> Bien camp**é**e sur s**e**s p**ie**ds **é**cart**é**s, elle s'est retourn**é**e. (277)

> [**S**]a langue a**ss**oiffée lé**ch**ant **s**e**s** lèvres **sèch**es. (385)

At first sight, these sample illustrations taken from the translation seem to indicate that Bardolph wholeheartedly embraced Farah's sonic writing. This is why a systematic recording of occurrences is critical. Arguably, my methodology has its own limitations since each sound pattern implemented was recorded as one occurrence, regardless of how intensely it was developed. Let us look at two examples side by side to illustrate my point:

> The wind in the apartment was **str**aggly with a **s**catter or aromas, **str**ong fragran**c**es pointing to a mo**s**t di**s**harmonious **s**tate of mind, **s**mells as distinct as mountain air, as ari**s**tocratic as **s**andalwood, or as **s**pe**c**ific in their inten**s**ity as Arabian **s**kin oils. (Farah: 181)

> Ses **trai**ts é**tai**ent empreints d'une **tris**te**s**se au bord des larmes. (Bardolph: 210)

The alliterative intensity displayed in Farah's sentence was recorded as one occurrence of alliteration, as was the shorter alliterating chain in [t] in Bardolph's (reinforced by other sound similarities, notably *traits*/*étaient*/*tristesse*, which were also recorded). Nowhere in the translation are passages to be found that implement the same sonic density that characterizes Farah's text. The excerpts from Bardolph's translation shown above represent, by far, the most striking illustrations of sound patterns. I will come back to the issues of frequency and intensity in the last section of this chapter after discussing examples from Waberi's text and its translation by Garane.

6. Sound motifs in the *Lands* of Waberi and Garane

The sound patterns in Waberi's *Pays* and Garane's *Land without Shadows* (henceforth *Land*) were recorded using the same methodology. Tables 4 and 5 show the occurrences found in each text and Table 6 presents the percentage of reactivation of each category of sound pattern in the translation. Paronomasia, which represents an important motif in Waberi's *Pays*, is an occasional product of the category titled "repetitions and morphological derivations". Illustrations of morphological derivation include the following word pairs: *inégalés*/*inégalables* (22) and *arrivés*/*arrivistes* (27).

Table 4. Recording of sound patterns in Waberi's *Le Pays sans ombre*

Alliterations and assonances	193
Paronomasia and phonic chiasmus	103
Internal rhymes	87
Tongue twisters	18
Repetitions and morphological derivations	20
Puns	8

Table 5. Recording of sound patterns in *The Land without Shadows* (trans. by Garane)

Alliterations and assonances	240
Paronomasia and phonic chiasmus	61
Internal rhymes	37
Tongue twisters	17
Repetitions and morphological derivations	8
Puns	6

Table 6. Re-creation of sound patterns by Garane

Alliterations and assonances	122%
Paronomasia and phonic chiasmus	55%
Internal rhymes	38%
Tongue twisters	83%
Repetitions and morphological derivations	40%
Puns	75%

There is no point in commenting on the number of occurrences in Waberi's text against Farah's since Farah's text is a much longer one. The third table, however, requires immediate comments as the numbers unarguably attest to Garane's commitment to Waberi's stylistic signature and more specifically to his alliterative motif, which is perfectly coherent with her introductory remarks to the translation.

The following excerpts lay out how specific patterns are implemented in Waberi's *Pays* and recreated in Garane's *Land*.

> Hésitante comme un **f**rêle esqui**f**, la vie sourd du ventre creux d'une **f**illette ; cette **f**ille en**f**ant au visage **f**ort émacié donne la becquée à un enfant tout aussi sou**ff**reteux (16)

> Cet homme […] récompense les vertu**eu**x – de plus en plus rares – et punit à sa manière les malveillants, les vanit**eu**x, les oppress**eurs**, les déloyaux, les vol**eurs**, les trich**eurs**, les arriv**iste**s et, *last but not l**east***, les tribal**iste**s (27)

The above excerpts illustrate the implementation of a simple, albeit well fleshed out, alliteration in [f], whereas the second one displays three successive internal rhymes.

The example below harbors more complexity with an array of paronomastic kinship (*prosélyte/politique/protocole*) reinforced by alliterations in [p] and [t].

> C'est un **p**rosélyte de la **p**olitique, un **p**ointilleux du **p**rotocole, un **t**ribun, un claustrophobe qui connaît bien des **t**ourments et des **t**ribulations depuis qu'il harangue les foules avec ses discours harassants, volubiles. (39)

The next example, however short that sentence may be, is replete with complex sound patterns: *biffure* echoes *fissure*, *pertuis* echoes *perdition*, which itself mirrors *épiderme*, and *monde* reverberates *moment* in a sonic construction in which lexical repetition and internal rhymes in [e] participate.

> Le premi**er** corps heurt**é**, fissur**é** : biffures de l'épiderme, moment de perdition, pertuis sur un autre monde, un autre épiderme. (51)

Sonic arrangements in brief clauses, such as those showcased in the two examples below, are no less striking, and sometimes even easier to perceive – as mentioned earlier:

> Marwo fuit la complicité du père sénilement serein, sûr de son droit, et du frère satrape et satyre simiesque. (101)

> Il y a aussi les fous malicieux, caudataires **inégalés** et flatteurs **inégalables**. (22)

The excerpt from p. 22 above provides a good illustration of morphological derivation (*inégalés*/*inégalables*), which in turns generates a paronomastic relation.

A selection of simple (first sentence) and complex (second and third ones) alliterative patterns are presented below:

> De**p**uis quand la chose **p**ublique se **p**rête à l'é**pop**ée du couple chez nous ? (50)

> **D**ans la **b**aie **d**'**Ab**yssinie, les filles sont souvent **b**elles et **B**elzé**b**uth rameutait sa troupe. (53)

> Notre monde est en **dé**liquescence avan**cée** et **dé**gage **des** gaz **dé**létères. (128)

While the penultimate example above showcases a crossed alliterative pattern alternating [d]s and [b]s in a staccato-like fashion, the last one brings to the fore paronomastic arrangements (*dégage*/*des gaz*; [–*escence*]/*avancée*) further sustained by alliterative [d]s.

Paronomasia even occurs in very short passages, whose brevity reinforces sound similarity and semantic connections:

> [L]'androgyne aux yeux de jais […]. (53)

> [E]ncore les mâles à satisfaire et les mânes à célébrer. (123)

This last example is remarkable for its perfect symmetrical scansion bringing together "**mâles** à **s**atisfaire" and "**mânes** à **c**élébrer". While no clear instance of Cratylian connection could be identified in *Pays*, Waberi's penchant for intertextual humor is best illustrated in the following two excerpts as a nod in the direction of his own sarcastic comment on the difficulty of Somali alliterative art:

> [S]ur la ligne qui va du Guatemala à l'île de Guam dans le Pacifique en passant par la Guinée dite française, le Gabon et le cap Gardafui […]. (70)

It is indeed fitting to read this line in reference to Waberi's social commentary offered in his digest of Somali literature ("Précis de littérature somalie"):

> S'il ne maîtrise pas son art à la perfection, l'allitération entraîne le poète par le biais des chaînes d'associations phoniques vers des images faciles. Ainsi, on a coutume de dire qu'un mauvais poète emmènera ses auditeurs dans un voyage épuisant et absurde de Mogadiscio à Milan en passant par Mombassa, Manchester et Moscou. 'If a poet does not master his art to perfection, alliterations will take him to facile imagery through chains of sonic association. People say that bad poet will take his audience to an exhausting and absurd journey from Mogadishu to Milan by way of Mombasa, Manchester, and Moscow.' (Waberi 1996: 2)

Whatever the reading one wants to make of that passage from *Pays*, be it as Waberi's sarcastic reflection on his own writing practice or as a criticism toward the proponents of the *gabay* and their intransigence over the alliterative rule, both theories are coherent with the wholesale irony and punning deployed by Waberi in his text, further exemplified by these additional excerpts:

Aden est en face, mais ce n'est pas non plus l'Éden.	(Waberi: 35)
'Aden is across the way, but it is not Eden either.'	(Garane: 19)
Étude du khat[63] en *ré* mâcheur	(Waberi: 80)
'A study of Khat in D-Muncher'	(Garane: 38)
Conte de fer	(Waberi: 87)
'A Ferrous Tale'	(Garane: 33)

As can be seen from the translations provided above for clarity, Garane perfectly manages to recreate Waberi's humor and sound-based puns in her translation. She also introduces her own puns, independently of any specific sound play in the original passage, such as "our daily dose of bitter bile" (*Land*: 66) whose allusion to the Bible's "give us this day our daily bread" does not go unnoticed. The following excerpts from her translation will show how much Garane embraced the sonic writing of Waberi; and while alliterations represent by far the dominant motif in her translation, one must also recognize her efforts toward paronomasia, tongue twisters, and internal rhymes:

> Here and there on the **dirty** hole-**ridden** **r**oof – warped by **r**ust (humidity **r**eigns supr**e**me) as much as wear – the most unlikely obj**e**cts **j**ostle each other and resonate with stran**g**e echoes. (7)

> Her s**k**in was so **c**ra**ck**ed and **c**overed with s**c**abs that she **resem**bled a **saur**ian. (17)

The first passage above brings together alliterations and phonic chiasmus (*dir/rid*) capitalizing on the alliterative consonant ([r]) in an overall tongue twisting sentence. The second one functions in a similar fashion but, this time, the sound similarities occurring at the end of the sentence work independently of the alliteration. The next two examples illustrate crossed alliterations, and the last two ones bring out internal rhymes, among other techniques.

63. "Stimulant leaf widely consumed in Yemen and the Horn of Africa" (Merriam Webster Dictionary, accessed July 6, 2018). The khat is consumed daily by a majority of men all over the Horn of Africa and represents an economic, social, and public health problem.

> **D**irty **b**rat **b**orn of the **D**evil's water, **g**o **g**et a nice **C**oca-**C**ola for that absent father of yours! (9)
>
> Here, take this **b**undle of khat and this **b**ill to pay for the **b**us to **B**al**b**ala […]. (15)
>
> [T]he all-time champ**ions** of lamentat**ions**, the professionals of complai**ning** and whi**ning**. (23)
>
> To **exp**ress an **ex**treme **dis**gust of **dis**tress and to name life where it is found. (76)

A particularly sophisticated sonic construction is achieved below, including two paronomastic pairs (*smell/smile*; *noses/nausea*):

> The **fl**ies **th**umb their **nos**es at the **sm**ell. The **fl**ies are the **sm**ile of **n**ausea. (81)

Short clauses also display their share of paronomasia:

> [T]he earth was **cl**ad in its green **cl**oak. (58)
>
> It's **gut**s that **count**s. (35)

Garane frequently uses one or more categories of the same sound patterns deployed in the original passages. The following bilingual excerpt illustrates my point:

> C'est un **p**rosélyte de la **p**olitique, un **p**ointilleux du **p**rotocole, un **t**ribun, un claustrophobe qui connaît bien des **t**ourments et des **t**ribulations […]. (Waberi: 39)
>
> 'He is a **p**roselyte to **p**olitics, is **p**ersnickety about **p**rotocol, a claustrophobic **t**ribune who has encountered many a **t**rial and **t**ribulation […].' (Garane: 20)

Overall, all these sonic arrangements create expectations, conscious or not, with readers. As in music, the brain yearns for the return of the same, for the cycle of time. The sheer density of sound patterns, some of which qualify as motifs as defined earlier, generates another layer of connections between the text and the readers. Yet not every translator systematically embraces their author's sonic project, however blatant it is, and the next section discusses exactly this.

7. Examining retranslations: A rare occasion with contemporary writers

Retranslation is defined as "a second or later translation of a single source text into the same target language" (Koskinen and Paloposki 2010: 294). This implies the existence of at least one previous translation and one previous translator (Koskinen and Paloposki 2015: 25).

While examining retranslations of a same text represents nothing out of the ordinary for authors whose works the literary institution has deemed to include to the canon like Dostoyevsky, Kafka, Lowry, Kundera, Freud, and Hegel (Gambier 1994: 413), such is not the case for most contemporary authors. Motivations for

retranslation are manifold and may include textual ones, such as the need for updating the translation and modifying language and stylistic choices. Causes for retranslation can also be of a non-textual, more prosaic nature and involve economic reasons or out-of-print editions, for instance. Alvstad and Assis Rosa point out the "contextual voices of the many agents that may be involved in the translation process of a given translation" (2015: 6) while Jansen and Wegener signal the overt or covert intervention of many people in the genesis of a translation, including editors and literary agents (Jansen and Wegener 2013: 6). For both translations and retranslations, some of these contextual interventions are easy to document as their materiality is embedded in the translation in the form of forewords or blurbs, or takes the form of published articles or interviews; yet others are less readily accessible, such as telephone or face-to-face conversations, or private correspondence (Alvstad and Assis Rosa 2015: 7).

Berman suggested that initial translations systematically tend to domesticate the text. His argument is supported by Gambier:

> La retraduction délie les formes asservies, restitue la signifiance, ouvre aux spécificités originelles tout en faisant travailler la langue traduisante : retraduire Apollinaire en finnois, c'est percevoir enfin que le poète n'est pas Finlandais, n'est pas inscrit dans la tradition locale. 'Retranslations liberate enslaved forms, restitute significance, and open up to original specificities all the while putting the translating language to work; retranslating Apollinaire in Finish means to recognize at long last that the poet is not a Finn, does not belong to the local tradition.' (1994: 415)

According to Gambier, whatever the impetus for retranslating texts (new original manuscript, censorship, mistakes or ponderousness in the previous translation),[64] retranslations are time-bound; the translation process and reception of translated texts depend on a specific time in history (Gambier 1994). However, Koskinen and Paloposki rightly point out that retranslations can also occur simultaneously or near-simultaneously (2010: 294).

The examples discussed below are a perfect example of quasi-simultaneous retranslations since some of Waberi's short stories were translated and retranslated around the same time period. Since *Le Pays sans ombre* is a collection of short stories, its nature allowed for individual short stories to be translated by different translators and published in various journals or anthologies. While Garane's translation was the first book-length English-language translation of one of Waberi's works,

64. The last of these categories might explain the retranslation of Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* by Bardolph. The first French-language translation by Jackson was published by Hatier in 1987 and Bardolph's retranslation was published by Le Serpent à plumes in 2000. Both translations bear the title *Née de la côte d'Adam*.

five of the short stories making up the book had been previously translated and appeared in publications focused on new Francophone voices or African writers. *Son-mêlé*, translated by V. C. Koppel under the title of *Sound Bitten*, was published in a bilingual edition in *Revue Noire* (1992); *Galerie des fous* was translated twice, as *The Gallery of the Insane* (trans. by Michael Dash 1999) and *The Fools's Gallery* (trans. by Birgit Schommer *et al.* 2001), respectively. *Le Mystère de Dasbiou* was translated by Anne Fuchs as *The Dasbiou Mystery* (2000), and Cynthia Hahn translated *Une femme et demie* as *A Woman and a Half* (2004).

Before addressing textual differences in the various translations, it is important to take a look at contextual and situational factors. *Galerie des fous* is a particularly interesting case in point. Its first translation, by Michael Dash, appeared in 1999 in *XCités, the Flamingo Book of New French Writing*, an anthology of short stories edited by Georgia de Chamberet published by UK-based publisher Picador. In 2000, *The Gallery of the Insane*, Waberi's short story translated by Dash, was shortlisted for the newly created Caine Prize for African Writing.[65] The second translation (or first retranslation), done by Birgit Schommer *et al.*, was published in 2001 by Weaver Press in Harare, Zimbabwe, as part of another anthology titled *Fools, Thieves, and Other Dreamers: Stories from Francophone Africa* edited by Sow, Couao-Zotti, and Waberi himself. This second anthology with only three short stories came out of a joint initiative between the French Embassy in Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe International Book Fair, and the University of Zimbabwe. The translations were done by students from the University of Zimbabwe under the supervision of lecturers (Madonko 2003) among whom was Birgit Schommer. Apart from *Son-mêlé*, which was translated much earlier, all translations of Waberi's individual short stories examined here happened between 1999 and 2004. It needs to be emphasized that Waberi was shortlisted for the Caine Prize with Dash's translation and that the three subsequent translations followed in rapid order (2000, 2001, and 2004). As Alvstad and Assis Rosa aptly point out:

> [T]he phenomenon of retranslation requires the consideration of the possible relations between the retranslated text and one or several pre-existing translations, which may have been used or (in)voluntarily ignored. As a consequence, a retranslation's comparative textual-linguistic profile may be drawn not only by mapping and comparing the source and target texts (a well-trodden path), but also by comparing the retranslation in question with previous translations. (2015: 9)

65. "The prize was launched in 2000 to encourage and highlight the richness and diversity of African writing by bringing it to a wider audience internationally. The focus on the short story reflects the contemporary development of the African story-telling tradition." (http://caineprize.com/).

While there is no documentation regarding the possible use or influence of Dash's first translation of *Galerie des fous* on its retranslation by Schommer and her students, Jeanne Garane clearly indicated that she did not want to read the previous translations of Waberi's short stories by fear of being influenced by other's textual choices (Garane 2010). This anxiety of influence, after Bloom's original coinage (1973), is given full attention by Koskinen and Paloposki:

> What makes retranslating different from other translation is that there exists at least one previous translation, and a previous translator. The figure of the first translator, either as a real-life person, as a mental image or a textual construction, is one obvious potential source of dependency for the second translator and the readers of the second translation alike, and this influence, or the careful avoidance of any influence, may affect the translation process in a number of ways. (2005: 26)

Garane's retranslation of those five short stories can hence be considered as "passive retranslation" (Pym 1998: 82) as she undertook them without reviewing existing translations. It should be pointed out, however, that a total avoidance of preexisting translations may have been difficult or nearly impossible. Garane was aware of their existence, and it is probable that she came across at least some of them yet her conscious strategy as she undertook the translation was one of avoidance. One could remark that Garane's translation of the title of *Galerie des fous* is the same as Dash's yet it can be argued that *The Gallery of the Insane* is a pretty straightforward or obvious translation. The same can be argued for *Le Mystère de Dasbiou*, titled *The Dasbiou Mystery* in both Garane's translation (2005) and Fuchs's (2000), and *Une femme et demie*, titled *A Woman and a Half* in Garane's translation (2005) and Hahn's (2004). The title of *Son-mêlé*, which offered more leeway in terms of interpretation and requested additional creativity from the translator, was rendered as *Sound Mix* by Garane (2005) and *Sound Bitten* by Koppel (Waberi 1992). Different levels of engagement to the textual materiality of each short stories are examined below.

It is probably less telling to observe how sound patterns have been perceived and translated at the scale of individual short stories, yet one still gets a good sense of how each translator reacted to what Waberi's texts do – drawing on Meschonnic's expression: "*ce que le texte fait*" 'what the text does'. Using the same recording method as the one presented above, I noticed that four out of five translators engaged from moderately to relatively weakly with the sonic architecture of the short stories they translated (Hahn, Schommer *et al.*, Fuchs, and Dash, in descending order). What can be observed beyond quantitative recording is the density of implementation in single passages or sentences. Schommer *et al.* offer occasional yet well-developed sonic constructions that include: "stunted coal-coloured stakes", "Coca-Cola he suckled from his crazy Mother", "the spears of the sun are sharper than slivers of a broken bottle", "furious fools fear", "professional furious fools",

"baton blows and barbed wire". The following excerpt from Hahn's translation testifies to her attempt to recreate alliterations, yet she is not as systematic as Garane:

> Marwo is running from the complicity of her father with his **s**erene **s**enility, sure of his rights, and from her brother, ruler and apish **s**atyr. (trans. by Hahn 2004: 3)

> Marwo flees the complicity of the **s**erenely **s**enile father **c**ertain of his rights, and of the **s**imian-like **s**atyr, her **s**atrap brother. (trans. by Garane 2005: 51)

Hahn's alliterative [s]s can be perceived by attentive readers, yet their diffuse implementation probably means that their effect will be lost on most others. Koppel's *Sound Bitten* and Garane's *Sound Mix* bring out a similar sonic density with eleven alliterative occurrences and five paronomastic occurrences, respectively. The following samples illustrate their respective realizations:

> A new hope was **b**orn. The day **b**egan to **b**reak. The hens **b**egan to lay. It was **b**ut a **b**udd**ing**, the flower**ing** would doubtless come lat**er**. But what did it matt**er**?
> (trans. by Koppel 1992: IX)

> Thus a new hope was **b**orn; day was **b**eginning to **b**reak. And eggs to hatch. It was noth**ing** yet **b**ut a **b**urgeo**ning**; the flower**ing** would doubtless be late.
> (trans. by Garane 2005: 66)

In this first example above, Koppel's choices, including parallel structures, make for an overall denser sonic architecture. In the following one, Garane's translation offers richer sound constructions coupled with an intertextual sonic association, as discussed earlier:

> We flung ourselves at him as if to crush him, all of us un**load**ing our **daily** quota of **b**itter **b**ile. (trans. by Koppel 1992: X)

> We **rushed** at him as though to **crush** him, to discharge over him in chorus **our daily dose of bitter bile**. (trans. by Garane 2005: 66)

Both excerpts presented below recreate Waberi's tongue-twisting pun, each in their own way, yet overall, Garane's translation operates on more levels and implements a larger number of categories of sound patterns: "shade" echoes "should", and "beacons" works as the sound axis bringing together "bearers" and "Nation".

> Why do we complain, we shadows, **somber somnambulic zombies**, while our leaders, yes-men, shining lights of the Nation, have **f**led with nothing less than the state's co**ff**ers? (trans. by Koppel 1992: IX)

> Why **should** we complain, we **shades**, **somber nyctalopic zombies**, while our o**ff**icials, **f**lag **b**earers and **beac**o**ns** of the Nati**on**, have **f**led with nothing less than the co**ff**ers of the State? (trans. by Garane 2005: 64)

Before I discuss the question of perception and the concept of sound motif in Farah's and Waberi's respective texts and their translation(s), it is certainly worth mentioning that Koppel's translation was published in *Revue Noire*, a journal devoted to African arts, and that *Son mêlé*/*Sound Bitten* was followed by one of Waberi's poem, *Estampes*, translated by Koppel as *Prints*. This editorial environment is key to understanding the translator's effort in reconstructing a tangible soundscape. The other translations of individual short stories discussed above do not manage to create a sufficient density of sound patterns for a motif to stand out. Schommer and her team tentatively engaged in the reenactment of Waberi's sound patterns, yet their efforts are scuttled by their sporadic and scattered implementation. I suggest building on these last remarks to examine the notion of accidental incidence as opposed to that of motivated value when considering the occurrence of sound patterns in a given text.

8. The concept of critical threshold of perception as delineation of sound motif

Discussing different translations of a same text is a helpful introduction to the notion of accidental occurrence. Yet prior to engaging with that notion, a few comments are called for after examining these different translations: first of all, at the scale of a short text not specifically labeled[66] as "poem", one can question the ability of the translator-as-super-reader (*archilecteur*) to perceive a writing strategy foregrounding a specific significance. While this theory may potentially be invalidated by Koppel's translation, its specific editorial environment can probably explain the extent to which sound patterns have been recreated. Secondly, not every short story in Waberi's collection brings out the same melopoetic level. *Le Mystère de Dasbiou*, for instance, is less rich in sound patterns than *Galerie des fous*, *Son-mêlé*, or *Une femme et demie*. It is thus hardly surprising that Fuchs did not focus her attention on sound structures when translating *Le Mystère de Dasbiou*.

As I mentioned earlier, one can question the translator's motivation when a sporadic implementation of sound patterns prevents their perception by the readers. Thus, the terminology of sound motif, based on the concepts of motivation, recurrence and frequency, can hardly be applied to translations in which sound patterns have been implemented sporadically, as a side project or for mere "decorative" purposes. The same logic applies to those translators who unquestionably set up sound patterns as an important axis of their translation project. Therefore, it is relevant to consider everything in their translations, even those short passages

66. This is all the truer for texts that are not laid out as verse as versified texts immediately condition translators' attitude.

within which sound patterns have been implemented because they participate in establishing a critical threshold of perception for the readers. In this regard, it is useful to turn to Berman's concept of underlying networks of signification[67] ("réseaux signifiants sous-jacents" 1999: 61). Berman discusses how stylistic patterns may seem irrelevant, or not connected, when examined in isolation, yet unmistakably appear as part of a broader and coherent writing strategy when considered at the scale of an entire text or the works of an author. Thus, passages such as "une petite table basse et bancale" (*Pays*: 14), "This is mindless madness" (*Secrets*: 184), and even "a shabby shoe" (*Land*: 7) are part and parcel of a specific writing or translation strategy and participate in creating a critical threshold of perception for the readers. Should they occur in a scattered fashion, they would not be perceived or, if perceived, would not create an "underlying network of signification". It is hence crucial to examine these texts and their translations with a methodology that systematically records what each text actually "does" or not. Such results allow me to challenge statements such as that from Cingal who claims that Bardolph's *always* tried to render the musicality of Farah's *Secrets* (2001: 94). Indeed, if one agrees with Cingal that Farah's writing is rooted in the *recurrence* of highly sophisticated stylistic patterns ("récurrence de procédés stylistiques très recherchés", Cingal 2001: 98), and that said recurrence along with musical variations on particular sounds represent metafictional signs that challenge the readers ("variations musicales autour de telle ou telle sonorité, sont autant de signes métafictionnels qui prennent le lecteur à partie", *ibid.*), one can hardly examine a few occurrences implemented sporadically and cannot afford not to engage with a systematic analysis.

The notion of return as an essential element underlying sound motifs implies a significant level of recurrence that creates a critical threshold of perception. Below that threshold, the readers of the translation are unable to detect a coherent system. In the specific case of Farah and Waberi as writers of Somali literary culture, the notion of motivation – another element underlying the terminology of sound motifs – is anything but subordinate since the sound motifs deployed in both *Secrets* and *Pays* are informed by their Somali oral poetic heritage. I am not implying that Farah and Waberi related to their heritage in the same way. With 70% of all sound patterns recorded in *Secrets*, alliterations (understood as encompassing assonances as well, in line with the Somali tradition) represent Farah's core motif and a clear attempt to engage closely with the composition rule of traditional Somali oral poetry. At the scale of a long novel, this is not a small feat and partially explains Farah's "quasi encyclopedic exploration of the lexicon" ("exploration quasi-encyclopédique

67. I am using Venuti's English translation of "réseaux signifiants sous-jacents". "Significance" would, however, be a translation more coherent with Meschonnic's concept of significance (*signifiance*), on which Berman in all probability drew.

du lexique", Cingal 2001: 92). In other words, without having published poetry – at least according to Western taxonomy – Farah perpetuates in his own way the works of his mother and maternal grandfather, all the while being very coherent with the social and political roles of the poet within the Somali culture, whose alliterative practice helps imprint the message. Yet, even with a specific focus on sound motif, offering a single reading of such a rich writing would be too simplistic. Farah's fascination for James Joyce is probably not unrelated to the melopoetic significance of Joyce's texts. African literature and postcolonial scholar Gikandi pointed out the hybrid nature of Farah's literary influences, including Joyce, Beckett and Yeats, on one hand, and Soyinka and Armah on the other hand:

> Farah's novels seem to be located at an interesting caesura: they are loaded with the weight of Somali oral culture, but they seek to go beyond the temporality of tradition; they derive their force and identity from a powerful intertextual relation with modernist texts. (Gikandi 1998: 754)

In light of my textual analysis, which is further supported by the remarks of scholars and statements by Farah himself, it seems that Bardolph developed her translation project not entirely ignoring Farah's alliterative writing – her sporadic re-creations can certainly be interpreted as a nod in that direction. Yet, overall, her translation points to the ancillary value that she may have assigned such a practice. This assessment allows me to raise several questions, one of which is related to that of critical threshold of perception discussed above. Muting Farah's sonic writing in translation also has the effect of erasing intertextual aesthetics, such as the double connection that brings together Farah's style and Joyce's.[68] Unarguably, it is difficult to weigh the role played by editorial decisions on any given translation project. Yet let us remember that Bardolph's translation was published by Le Serpent à plumes, a publisher who focuses on African Literature, is a strong promoter of rich, varied and sophisticated styles,[69] and also published Waberi's *Le Pays sans ombre*. One can, however, easily imagine that the sheer task of re-creating sound motifs at the scale of an entire (and long) novel requires substantial time and effort, which might be incompatible with deadlines given by a publishing house. Yet again, this hypothesis can be dismissed if one considers that Richard's formidable reenactment of Hove's complicated sonic landscape in his French translation, which will be discussed in Chapter 3, was published by French publisher Actes Sud. It is reasonable to think that Bardolph engaged in a different reading of what Gikandi termed "loaded with

68. Beyond shared narrative motifs, Farah relates to Joyce not only in terms of alliterative writing but also in that Joyce's sonic style also relates to an oral literature ruled by specific codes, more specifically Old Irish oral literature (see Tymoczko 2005).

69. "une langue riche, variée et de grande qualité" (publisher's site: http://www.leserpentaplumes.com/catalogues)

the weight of Somali oral culture" (Gikandi 1998: 754), as evidenced by the analysis of the articles Bardolph devoted to Farah in which she only pays lip service to his Somali stylistic palimpsest:

> If the novels written in English establish such a living continuity with the riches of oral Somali poetry, it is essentially through this device of represented dreams. They are the personal and social unconscious of the text, the sources of its main images and emotions; in the reader's mind they create a mode of questioning that in some of its aspects is specifically Somali, but also accessible to all, even when the poetical tropes seem ambiguous or inconclusive: we all work together at meaning. (Bardolph 1998a: 171)

Bardolph's take on Farah's incorporation of Somali oral literature raises several questions. Are Western scholars educated to embrace different modes of meaning? Is sound as a valency relegated at the bottom of the scale, unless the translator is faced with a text that is spatially organized as a poem? Is fiction a valid reason to ignore or mute sound as a vector of significance in Western thought? While I do not pretend to answer any of these questions, my theory is that all these combined factors contribute to perpetuating some translators' resistance to the sonic architecture of fictional texts and institutionalized deafness in general.

Drawing on Gikandi's invitation to carefully examine epigraphs (1998), I analyzed those that punctuate Waberi's *Land* (by Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Tchicaya U Tams'i, Hugo, Soyinka, Shakespeare, and Djebar).[70] Such a framing of poetic inserts, added to the brevity of the short story format, certainly helps translators adopt a different mindset. Arguably, Waberi engages differently with the composition rules of traditional Somali poetry that he gently mocks. While alliterations represent an important motif in Waberi's text (making up 45% of recorded sound patterns), they are far from being as overwhelming as in Farah's *Secrets*. Paronomasia (24%) and internal rhymes (20%) represent a significant part of all sound patterns recorded in *Pays*. Tongue twisters and puns, albeit less frequent, still play a role in supporting Waberi's sarcastic sense of humor, which helps him deliver his own share of cutting criticism toward the Djiboutian society and government. Waberi's sonic landscape is more eclectic than his predecessor's. In his foreword to Garane's translation, Farah qualified Waberi's poetic prose as:

> [N]ot at all encumbered with the rhetorical devices of his mother tongue, Somali. Yet there is evidence of his Somaliness everywhere in the text […] now acknowledged with a nod of his head as a tribute to his provenance. In fact, every now and then Waberi surrenders his creative energy wholly to the Somali side of him: rhetorical, lyrical, metaphor-based. (2005: ix)

70. Interestingly, Djebar's epigraph chosen by Waberi, taken from *L'Amour, la fantasia*, displays a remarkable alliterative frenzy.

What is important is this quasi-oxymoronic statement may be that Waberi shows a greater freedom in his writing strategy, a freedom that points to his nomadic writing style (in the sense of literary foraging) and is perfectly coherent with his project to participate in a "littérature-monde de langue française" (Waberi 2009). Applied to Waberi, "nomadism" takes on additional hues; more specifically, it points to the role of language in exploring the meanders of imagination and unconsciousness (Hirchi 2006: 598). As remarked earlier, Waberi's poetic positioning by critics and publishing houses alike, up to the coining of "poésie fiction" ('fiction poetry') by Chanda (2001), creates an unescapable reading grid for his translators. The editorial blurbs on Farah's novels frame his texts quite differently: whereas "poetic" appears now and then on the back cover of his original novels in English, his writing is more consistently qualified as *exotic*, *sophisticated*, *lush*, *daring*, or else *urbane* (back cover of the 1999 paperback edition of *Secrets*). In the French-language edition, there is no mention of style anymore; rather, the French translation of *Secrets* is presented as a novel that:

> [B]aigne dans une atmosphère délétère où les intrigues familiales, la magie et le sexe occupent les esprits tandis que les tirs d'armes automatiques se multiplient dans la ville. '[I]s bathed in a deleterious atmosphere in which family plots, magic, and sex are on everybody's mind while machine gun shots proliferate in the city.'
> (*Secrets* 1999 [French edition]: back cover)

Another factor that contributes to differently conditioning each writing project is that the short story, since the advent of prose poetry, is more prone to be associated with poetry than the novel is. While both have shortness in common (Dessons 1991: 4), certain scholars point out that short stories narrate while poems don't, at least if one agrees with Chapelan's definition of prose poetry as a text whose main function is not to narrate or demonstrate and that does not attempt to be first and foremost a narration or a reasoning, but rather accumulates energy through music or images (Chapelan 1946: XVI). Examining Waberi's text through the lens of this definition proves useful since only five of his seventeen short stories attempt to "narrate" an actual story (*Le Mystère de Dasbiou*, *Le Coryphée de la colonie*, *Une femme et demie*, *Brasero dans le ciel*, and *Askar des ordures*).[71] While I suggest that the highly dissimilar positioning of Farah's and Waberi's texts contributed to orienting Bardolph's and Garane's respective translation projects, I will revisit that proposition in Chapter 4 after discussing Armah's translation by J. and R. Mane.

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71. Among those five short stories, only two show a lesser density in terms of sound patterns.

CHAPTER 3

The aesthetics of repetition and their meanings

In this chapter, I examine the manifestation of repetition in the writing of Côte d'Ivoire author Jean-Marie Adiaffi and that of Chenjerai Hove from Zimbabwe, and how their stylistic signatures were perceived in translation. Both writers alternatively published poetry and fiction if one wants to use the Western taxonomy discussed in Chapter 1, although the generic issue will be further discussed in this chapter. Unlike Farah and Waberi, Adiaffi and Hove draw on a distinct literary heritage, Akan for Adiaffi and Shona for Hove.

1. Understanding Adiaffi's transgeneric position through the lens of translation

1.1 *N'zassa* literature

Jean-Marie Adiaffi was born in 1941 in Bettié, Côte d'Ivoire, to Agni[72] parents. He started off his career in cinematic arts before turning to philosophy, then writing in 1969. His first publication, *Yale Sonan* (1969), a collection of poems, did not get the attention of the critics. Success came later with *La carte d'identité* (novel), which was awarded the Grand prix littéraire de l'Afrique noire in 1981, and *D'éclairs et de foudres* (long poem), both published in 1980. His other publications include another collection of poems, *Galerie infernale* (1984) and two novels, *Silence, on développe* (1992) and *Les naufragés de l'intelligence,* which was published posthumously (2000). With a total of eight books[73] published over a thirty-year span, Adiaffi does not qualify as a prolific writer, and yet he was a vocal activist who fought for the recognition of Akan culture and regularly acknowledged his indebtedness to the grandmother who raised him:

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72. The Agni or Anyi people are a subgroup of the Akan originally from Ghana and living in Côte d'Ivoire.

73. Adiaffi also published an essay and a children's book.

> C'est à elle que Jean-Marie Adiaffi, de son propre aveu, doit en partie tout ce qu'il sait aujourd'hui de la littérature orale et d'une façon générale de la culture akan. C'est elle qui a posé les bases de sa formation artistique et littéraire, avant qu'il ne s'intéresse à l'aspect livresque de la connaissance, au cours de son cursus scolaire et universitaire. 'Jean-Marie Adiaffi himself recognizes that he owes everything he knows about Akan oral literature and Akan culture in general to his grandmother. It is his grandmother who laid the foundation of his artistic and literary training, before he turned to books for knowledge during his school and college years.'
>
> (Gnaoulé-Oupoh 2000: 274)

Adiaffi's exposure to different literatures in the broadest sense, be they Akan, other African literatures (Senghor), Caribbean (Césaire), or French (Rimbaud, Lautréamont, Éluard), as well as different philosophies[74] are reflected in his works to such an extent that his poetic signature closely bears the mark of each of these eclectic influences (Gnaoulé-Oupoh 2000). Typical Senghorian tropes, such as the suffering of the Black people during colonial rule, the struggle for independence, issues of quest for identity, and the rehabilitation of African heritage as a whole are all mirrored in Adiaffi's texts.

Examining Adiaffi's texts requires to delve deeper into the vexed issue of genres inasmuch as generic hybridity lied at the heart of his concerns and shaped the very fabric of his works. *D'éclairs et de foudres*, presented as one long poem, includes, for instance, dialogues and narration, which prevents it from being considered a prose poem whose definition implies shortness and absence of narration (Chapelan 1946, Dessons 1991). Adiaffi was comfortable with his unconventional generic stance (according to Western criteria) and claimed that his writing reflected a typical Akan art form called *n'zassa*, which refers to the patchwork loincloth that Akan tailors create using different fabrics from previous loincloths (Gnaoulé-Oupoh 2000). Adiaffi considered the *n'zassa* metaphor fitting to qualify his own writing and even a literary Renaissance at large:

> Cette Renaissance littéraire, en ce qui nous concerne, est bien la finalité ultime de nos recherches, partir de la littérature africaine pour innover, trouver de nouvelles formes qui ne soient ni répétition béate et anachronique des formes du passé dépassé ni mimétisme servile et inadapté de l'Occident. 'This literary Renaissance, as far as we are concerned, is the ultimate purpose of our research: starting from African literature to innovate, to find new forms that would neither be a naive and anachronistic reproduction of past and outdated forms, nor a servile imitation of Western forms.' (Adiaffi 1983a: 20)

74. It is worth mentioning Adiaffi's particular interest in pre-Socratic poetry, which includes forms such as formulaic expression, parataxis, and rhythmic prose.

Critics regularly echo Adiaffi's transgeneric and transcultural claims[75] and point out that *n'zassa* metaphorically allows him to escape the artificial generic taxonomy that differentiates novels, short stories, epics, plays, essays, and poetry (Adiaffi, 2000). Adiaffi's stand is not unrelated to Césaire's and apply more specifically to Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (Gnaoulé-Oupoh 2000). Surprisingly, while scholars analyzed rhythm and sound play in *D'éclairs et de foudres* (Jules Tiburce Kouadio 1984; Madeleine Borgomano 1987; Bruno Gnaoulé-Oupoh 2000, Kobenan N'Guettia Kouadio 2005), Adiaffi's claim to transgenericity never encouraged scholars to give a similar reading to his "novels". It is surprising, for instance, that Atcha's detailed analysis of *Les naufragés de l'intelligence* through the lens of *n'zassa* falls short of what a full-blown poetic reading implies, something that Atcha initiated with the examination of the text's spatial arrangement. Overall, scholars tacitly continue to approach texts created elsewhere using, consciously or not, Western generic compartmentalization. More specifically, scholars continue to listen attentively to texts that bear the label "poem" but oppose a stubborn deafness to those marketed as "novels". This paradox is even more unsettling as Adiaffi's *La carte d'identité* (henceforth *La carte*) was published in the same year as *D'éclairs et de foudres* (henceforth *D'éclairs*) and considering that both texts present striking similarities in terms of style. I will return to this paradox when analyzing excerpts from *La carte*.

1.2 Toward transpoetics: An aural and surrealist reading

Césaire's influence on Adiaffi extends beyond their common conception of the role of the poet as an awakener of consciousness and the role of poetic discourse (Gnaoulé-Oupoh 2000). Beyond shared lexical tropes, it is more specifically in the arrangement of words that their similitude is most striking, with their extensive use of parataxis, repetition and circularity. A book-length study undertaken by African literature scholar Kouadio (2005) on *oralistes*/'orality poets' from Côte d'Ivoire, including Zadi Zaourou, Ebony, and Adiaffi, reveals interesting parallels with other French-language poetic texts in terms of sonic construction. Kouadio's analysis of surrealist texts such as Perse's *Anabase*, Prévert's *Paroles*, Breton's *L'Union libre*, and Novarina's *L'Espace furieux* shows their formal similarities with the above-mentioned orality poets in terms of repetitions (Perse's core organizing principle), parallelism and anaphora (Prévert), lexical and grammatical recurrences (Breton), and circularity (Novarina). What is critical to understand here is that the

75. See, for instance, Atcha (2007) for a detailed analysis of generic and textual hybridity in Adiaffi's *Les naufragés de l'intelligence*. Semujanga (1999) proposes to use transcultural poetics as a methodological approach to African literature in general, while Tro (2009) suggests generic falsification as a modern literary modality.

sonic significance built into the texts of orality poets are not an African prerogative nor the exclusive mode of expression of artists drawing on their oral literary heritage (Kouadio 2005: 329–330). Rather, this mode of expression needs to be framed in non-essentialist terms. While aural poetics is indeed a phenomenon found in literature of various origins and inspirations, *framing* the unique historical conditions of production of each specific text is critical. Along the same lines, it seems appropriate to ponder on the organic connections between surrealism and Negritude as African literature scholar Lindfors aptly points out:

> It is significant that the literary form chosen most often to carry this message was the surrealist poem. This form, with its powerful analogical strategies of rhythm, image and symbol, not only epitomized what Senghor regarded as the essence of African verbal art (Bâ), it also simultaneously linked African creativity with a respected, albeit once avant-garde, mode of European poetic expression. Negritude poetry was thus something both new and old, both freshly inventive yet recognizably imitative, a cross-cultural poetry in a quasi-familiar hybrid form that blended and synthesized two disparate artistic traditions into a harmoniously integrated whole. (2009: 24)

To foreground the connections between these two literary movements is helpful for approaching aesthetics considerations in a more nuanced fashion and situate them within a broader horizon.

1.3 Adiaffi's *carte*

La carte, although unmistakably drawing on Negritude, was published in the wake of satirical novels by Francophone West African writers such as Mongo Beti, Bernard Danié, Ferdinand Oyono, and Camara Lay who paved the way for their successors as early as the 1950s (Lindfors 2009: 25).

> The change in form and mood suited the temper of the times. Now that colonialism was moribund, one could afford to laugh at colonizer and colonized alike, point out absurd aspects of their interaction. […] The fact that independence was just around the corner made self-confident self-criticism and joking possible. Instead of striving to impress the colonial master, one now had license to tickle him, even if the last laugh was at his own expense. Satirical fiction may have helped to ease social and political tensions in French Africa prior to independence by comically deflating some of the issues that had been blown out of proportion during the Negritude era. The ironic needle now spoke louder than the pistol shot. (Lindfors 2009: 24)

La carte's plot can be summarized as a Kafkaesque quest for identity that plays on different conceptions of identity: defined by French colonial conventions on

one hand, and by Akan society on the other hand. One morning, Agni Prince Mélédouman is summoned by the French colonial powers who demand to verify his identity by way of a French *carte d'identité*, the only document recognized by the commandant representing France in Côte d'Ivoire. Minuscule and doubly ridiculed by his name and the nickname given to him by the locals, Commandant Kakatika Lapine has Mélédouman imprisoned, beaten, and then released under the condition that he bring back his *carte d'identité* within seven days. As Borgomano (1987) observes, the plot merely serves as narrative framework of a much larger writing project. Mélédouman's quest for identity superimposes with his failed attempt to make Commandant Kakatika acknowledge the existence of his rich Agni culture. Adiaffi's astute play on identities[76] draws on Mélédouman's remarkable mastery of the French language proving the Other, Commandant Katatika, that the French language – which Mélédouman enriches with Agni oral arts[77] – is also part of his own identity. More specifically, Mélédouman's demonstration draws on his verbal dexterity and perfect mastery of rhetorical arts, creating a carefully crafted text in which words segue into each other (Borgomano 1987: 31). In the next section, I address Adiaffi's literary heritage within the larger framework of Akan literary arts and outline the main characteristics of the latter.

1.4 Akan poetics

It is important to stress that Akan literature, in contrast with Somali literature, cannot be approached as an entirely homogeneous entity. Somali language, culture, and literature are common to different regions in the Horn of Africa, and the exceptional homogeneity of the Somali community makes them stand out in Africa – an exception rather than the norm (Richard 2009). With four coexisting linguistic groups (Kwa-Akan, Kru, Gur, and Mande), Côte d'Ivoire is a typical example of West Africa's ethnic and linguistic diversity.[78] Akan belongs to the Kwa group of the Niger-Congo family and its various dialects are spoken in Ghana and parts of Côte d'Ivoire. While Akan linguistic varieties are mutually intelligible, the Akan group can be further divided into subgroups, including Agni, which is Adiaffi's native community. With over seventy languages spoken in Côte d'Ivoire, most people speak at least two languages, including one language from the Niger-Congo linguistic group. In a study of *Les naufragés de l'intelligence*, Coulibaly

76. Like Adiaffi, Mélédouman is a native of Bettié, studied philosophy in La Sorbonne, and is an advocate of Agni culture and arts.

77. Adiaffi (1983a: 19).

78. For a full depiction of Côte d'Ivoire's sociolinguistic situation, see Djité (1989).

(2009) examines Adiaffi's use of code-switching between different Côte d'Ivoire languages. Adiaffi's strategy focuses mainly on onomastics, allowing him to create different layers of meaning and establish a complicity with readers of different linguistic communities. One of the police chiefs bears the nickname *Namala namala* ('Corruption corruption' in Maninka), another one that of *Guégon* ('Hunter Mask' in Yacouba), while Agni is combined with French as in *L'Aumônier l'Abbé yako Joseph* ('Chaplain Father condolences Joseph') or *la prophétesse Akoua Mando Sounan* ('Prophetess I did not find a human man') (Coulibaly, 2009). Other uses of code-switching by Adiaffi include the FPI, *Français Populaire Ivoirien*/'Popular French of Côte d'Ivoire' (Tro 2009). The same onomastics double-entendre is found in *La carte* and participates in its satirical tone. Adiaffi's naming strategy capitalizes on their meaning in Agni, starting with Kakatika ('giant monster'), to Mélédouman ('my name was falsified'), old Mihouléman ('I am not dead yet'), Mélédouman's nephew and heir Mikrodouman ('I have a name'), and point to the larger claim to identity and identification.

Understanding what Adiaffi is doing in terms of *n'zassa* or recycling other artistic practices, particularly as it pertains to his aural writing, requires a closer examination of Akan oral literature. Akan literature scholar Kwabena Nketia (1967) mentions proverbs, drum language poetry, funeral dirges, libation poetry, folktales, and folk songs to illustrate the richness of Akan literary arts. Nana Abarry also points to verse narratives and praise poems (1994: 310), and signals the role of tongue twisters, songs, and poems in daily life. Techniques of repetition represents their core stylistic signature and include rhymes and alliterations (Abarry 1994). *Apaee*, Akan praise poetry or appellation poetry,[79] which is a literary genre that includes poetry, drama, spoken art and dance, is characterized by its "highly mannered and controlled syntactic and phonological patterns", with carefully crafted rhythmic structures, puns, and sound plays (Boadi 1989: 182 and 186). Repetition and syntactical parallelism, both typical patterns of West African oral poetry, are found in *apaee* and draw upon a sophisticated sound architecture, including homonyms, associations and repetitions of vowels and consonants, and metrics. Another characteristic, called word compounding, is specific to the Akan language:

> An inescapable component of the style is the process of word compounding. The high-sounding words so common a feature of the poems are the product of a particular technique of stringing words together, probably involving a process peculiar to the strategy of oral poetry in Akan. (Boadi 1989: 189)

79. Akan scholars do not agree on its English translation (some suggest 'praise poetry' while others insist on 'appellation poetry').

Another study led by Anyidoho discusses more specifically the technique of parallelism in *apaee* and how it combines rhymes, assonances, and alliterations (1991: 69). Drawing on Nketia (1955), Anyidoho points to the artistic value of these prosodic arrangements and how those help carry over the poet's message.

1.5 Translating repetition as a poetics of identity

La carte can be divided into two distinct groups. The first group, consisting of the first six chapters and the last one, stages the confrontation between Prince Mélédouman and Commandant Kakatika. Its sarcastic overtone feeds on an abundance of puns and sound plays and its style is characterized by a formidable display of sophisticated rhetorical devices, which allegorically embodies Mélédouman's struggle for the recognition of his Agni heritage. In the second group of chapters, whose narration is clearly more akin to West African traditional storytelling, Mélédouman, accompanied by his granddaughter, undertakes an absurd search for concrete proofs of his identity. The writing in these chapters starkly departs from Western conventions and the wholesale sarcasm that structures the first part is replaced by spiritual, even mystical, overtones. Repetitions intensify but are clearly less varied with a narrower focus on lexical and syntactical repetitions.

Brigitte Katiyo's translation was published as *The Identity Card* by Zimbabwe Publishing House in 1983, only three years after *La carte* came out. Little is known about Brigitte Katiyo and the following information reflects what I was able to compile to the best of my knowledge. While Katiyo translated only two literary texts, she works as a professional translator[80] and a conference interpreter. Under the name Angays-Katiyo, she also translated Zimbabwean author Wilson Katiyo's *A son of the Soil* (1976) into French as *La terre de Sekuru* (1985). It is important to remember that *La carte* represents the text that launched Adiaffi's literary career: this means that little was known about Adiaffi himself and that probably very few reviews of his book were available when Katiyo worked on her translation as opposed to what is available today, which includes a significant number of scholarly works devoted to *La carte* and its translations in various languages. Adiaffi's poetic concern became more and more evident with each of his publications until his death in 1999. In the 1980s, critics insisted on the documentary value of African literature (more often than not written in the singular) and viewed it through a lens magnifying social and political concerns. Whenever the question of writing or style was brought up, it was mainly to bring out the alterity of those texts, understood as different, unusual, and sometimes unsettling, yet rarely to highlight their poetics. When she worked on her

80. Her published translations include scholarly books about African history and culture.

translation, Katiyo was not able to benefit from the extensive scholarship regarding Adiaffi that is available today, including those studies analyzing his particular poetic signature. Katiyo's translation is devoid of paratextual information: there is no introduction nor translator's notes or glossary, and she did not publish any article documenting her translation either. To reconstruct her approach of Adiaffi's text, I could only rely on my own interpretation of her translation choices. In the section below, I will start with establishing the specific workings of sound patterns in Adiaffi's original text, then their re-creation in Katiyo's translation.

The motif of repetition in *La carte* rests upon a variety of techniques, starting with the repetition of identical words within the same sentence or paragraph (lexical repetition) and syntactic parallelism, which is exemplified in the sentences below. In the excerpt from p. 6, rhythmic parallelism magnifies the sentence's syntactic parallelism. Because of the density of sound connections in the excerpt from p. 41, I chose not to use boldface to avoid making the patterns unintelligible. In that particular passage, Adiaffi's technique relies on a frenzy of lexical iteration (*pouvoir/moyens/techniques/intellectuels*) enhanced by syntactic parallelism.

> Et ça, ces **jolis** ornements à mes pieds, ces **jolis** brace**le**t**s** à mes poign**e**t**s**. (6)
>
> Vous aviez entre vos mains les pouvoirs, tous les pouvoirs, les moyens, tous les moyens. Le pouvoir technique, les moyens techniques. Le pouvoir intellectuel, les moyens intellectuels. Le pouvoir moral, le moyen moral. (41)

An additional and frequent technique observed in *La carte* is morphological derivation:

> Mélédouman savait par expérience ce qu'« aller au **cercle** » veut dire dans cette « **encerclée** » colonie. (3)
>
> **Prince**, **prince**, de la **principauté** […]. (3)
>
> Suis-moi **innocemment** au cercle, saint-**Innocent**. (4)
>
> Pauvre pantin qui essayait […] de **jouer** un rôle **injouable**. Et qui le **jouait** avec un talent tragi-comique […]. (5)
>
> Une fois n'est pas **tradition**, n'est-ce pas, cher prince **traditionnel** ? (26–27)
>
> On a vu dans l'histoire de la **colonisation** des peuples **colonisateurs** adopter la culture du peuple **colonisé.** (33)
>
> Oui, je vous accuse de **trahison** et de **tricherie** et moi je ne joue pas avec les **traîtres** et les **tricheurs.** (42)

Although paronomasia is more difficult to implement than morphological derivation, it complements the latter device since paronomastic chains likewise rely on the close phonemic proximity of words. It is useful to recall the practice of word compounding as a typical poetic device facilitated by the structure of the Akan

language. Strictly speaking, paronomastic chains are more akin to the technique of substitution as are chiasmus. The other sound patterns pertaining to repetition as such include alliterations, assonances, and internal rhymes. I also recorded tongue twisters inasmuch as they participate in the deployment of irony and sarcasm as mentioned earlier. The following excerpts show how the above-mentioned devices are combined and function together in *La carte*:

> Maintenant il s'agit donc de recueillir tout ce venin splendide dans une assiette en or. Pour le servir chaud et savoureux aux affamés de la liberté, aux assoiffés de la dignité. Il s'agit de récolter ce succulent venin […]. (36)

A detailed analysis of this passage helps understand the multiple layers of connections that phonemic similarity creates. Beyond a simple lexical repetition (*venin*) and syntactic parallelism (*il s'agit donc de*/*il s'agit de*), we can observe how a series of qualifiers are connected by alliterative [s]s (*splendide*, *savoureux*, *succulent*), and how *affamés* echoes *assoiffés*, *liberté*, *dignité*, and *récolter* in rapid succession, while *assoiffés* recalls *assiette*. A similar construction is offered in the next example. Once more, because of the shere density of sound connections in that excerpt, boldface was not used to avoid obscuring its patterns:

> La loi, la légalité, la légitimité : c'est moi et moi seul. Il n'y a pas plus à Bettié qu'ailleurs deux légalités, deux légitimités, deux cartes d'identité. (32)

The most obvious pattern rests on lexical and syntactical repetition, reinforced by paronomasia (*légalité*/*légitimité*) as well as internal rhymes and assonances in [e]. The next example shows a more elaborate paronomastic chain, combined once again with internal rhymes:

> Vous piétinez, vous humiliez, vous opprimez, vous réprimez, vous exploitez, vous niez […]. (42)

Vowel repetition – assonances and internal rhymes – and chiasmus (*rev*/*ver*, bolded below) occasionally coalesce:

> On voyait fourmiller dans le pagne de ce curieux condamné une armée révoltée de vermine. (72)

In the passage below, Adiaffi played on the homophonic sameness of *perle* ('drip') and *perles* ('pearls') and continued in the same vein with lexical repetition (*collier*, *histoire*) augmented by alliterative [k]s and [s]s:

> Visage qui perle : je te cueille pour un collier de perles, un collier de sueur et de sang pour ceindre ma fiancée au jour de nos nouvelles noces, avec la vie, avec l'histoire, notre histoire d'amour, reconstituée des ruines de la haine. (145)

Adiaffi's transgeneric or a-generic stand becomes more intelligible with the reading of *D'éclairs et de foudres* published with the label "long poem". One of the features common to *D'éclairs* and *La carte* is their remarkable performative writing enacted by the very same aural devices. The excerpts from *D'éclairs* are presented in the original layout of the first edition published by CEDA in 1980.

> Vous petits nègres mercédes-odorisés, merde-
> sots-odorisés qui maintenez la douloureuse
> **p**érennité du fouet du vol du pillage du viol dans nos
> murs 'You young negroes with your malodorous Mercedes, you mephitic-feces-fools who maintain the painful permanence of whipping robbing pillaging raping within our walls[81]' (63)

Crude language and puns combine in a passage that is best described as a combination of aural techniques stringing words together to create associations (wealth and stench, wealth and foolishness), equating *vol* ('robbing') to *viol* ('raping') through paronomasia, and bringing together *pérennité* and *pillage*. *La carte* also displays its fair share of crude language and plays on words, both of which participate in the wholesale irony that characterizes the first part of the book. Commandant Lapine, already handicapped by a problematic and graphic last name[82] is further saddled with an Agni nickname meaning 'giant monster' that not only mocks his shortness but resonates with further below-the-belt connotations in French:

> Ensuite, Kakatika, qui lui resta ! Ah ! Kakatika ! Outre la sonorité nauséabonde, empuantie, merdière et emmerdante des premières syllabes, cela veut dire « monstre géant ». (11)
>
> Kakatika, a nickname he kept. Ah Kakatika! Apart from the nauseating, foul, shitty sound of the first two syllables, it means giant monster. (Katiyo: 7)

Another powerful case in point to illustrate Adiaffi's techniques is found in the following passage, this time leveraging a combination of syntactic chiasmus and paronomasia:

> Un matin plein de fourmis dans l'air épais qui surplombe le village, **des hommes blancs habillés de noir et casqués de mort**, **des hommes noirs habillés de blanc et masqués de douleur et de honte** ensemble ont pendu le vieux nègre pendu au village … 'One morning full of ants in the thick air rising above the village, white men dressed in black and capped with death, black men dressed in white and cloaked in pain and shame together hung the old negro hung in the village …' (*D'éclairs* : 50)

81. My translation. *D'éclairs et de foudres* has not been translated in English.

82. "La pine" (French slang) translates as 'prick' (penis).

Had *D'éclairs* been translated into English, it would have been edifying to examine the strategies implemented by the translator to reconstruct such a rich sonic architecture. I have no doubt that the translator would have carefully taken this dimension into account as the generic positioning of texts marketed as poems immediately sends a message that conditions the approach of the translators, yet the *how* remains a challenge and is therefore particularly interesting.

An examination of the excerpts from Katiyo's translation presented below offers insights into her approach to Adiaffi's techniques. While I recorded the occurrences using the same methodology presented in Chapter 2, that is through independent readings of Adiaffi's *La carte* and Katiyo's *Identity Card* (henceforth *ID*), I chose to present excerpts from the translation with the corresponding passage in French for the mere reason that Adiaffi's motif of repetition is rooted not only in sound patterns but also in frequent lexical repetitions and morphological derivations, which are passage-specific.

> I have all the power here, and power means force. How can anyone conceive power which is not force? A feeble power maybe? No, power is forceful, otherwise it is not power (27)

> C'est moi qui ai le pouvoir et tout le pouvoir. Et un pouvoir est puissant ou n'est pas. Comment concevoir un pouvoir impuissant, un pouvoir faible ? Tout pouvoir est fort ou n'est pas … (37)

The sophisticated strategy that Katiyo implemented to sustain repetition merits a few observations. She recreates her own morphological derivations (*force*/*forceful*) and by doing so feeds an alliterative chain in [f]s, which accentuates the contrasting poles of "feeble" and "forceful" in the same manner as "fort" and "faible".

> Your word was the creative word, the **d**ivine word, which shaped everything out of **d**arkness. You were the **essence** of truth, the **essence** of **d**ivine revelation. (31)

> **V**otre **v**erbe était le **v**erbe créateur, le verbe di**v**in qui **t**irait **t**oute chose des **t**énèbres. **V**ous étiez l'essence de la **v**érité, de la ré**v**élation di**v**ine. (43)

This passage perfectly illustrates the challenges faced by the translator. Katiyo recreates the motif with different techniques, repeating "essence" for instance, to compensate for other losses in terms of alliterations, for instance.

> What about the **r**ootlets which have taken **r**e**f**uge under **h**uge **r**ocks, out of the **r**each of any un**h**oly **h**ands? Oh, those clinging tenacious **r**oots, stub**born**, invulnera**ble** little **r**oots! Are you sure you can pull out and destroy all the **r**oots of the baobab **tree**, the cashew **tree**, the msasa **tree**? Are you sure you can **r**emove all the **r**ootlets, one after the other, up to the very last, from this granite, harsh, **stony soil**? (29)

> Les **ra**dicelles, les **ra**mifications **r**éfugiées sous les **r**ochers, indé**ra**cinables, inaccessibles aux mains impies qui s'aviseraient de les arracher impunément même l'arbre une fois abattu. Ah ! Les **ra**cines, les **t**enaces **ra**cines, les **têt**ues pe**t**ites **ra**cines, les invulnérables pe**t**ites **ra**cines ! Êtes-vous sûrs de pouvoir détruire, arracher toutes les **ra**cines d'un baobab, d'un acajou, d'un fromager, de couper toutes les **ra**dicelles, une à une, dans ce sol g**ra**nit**eux**, dans cette terre g**ra**vel**euse**, caillou**teuse**, pier**reuse** ? (40)

Interesting to observe here is Katiyo's deliberate choice to accentuate lexical repetition with the systematic use of "tree" ("baobab tree, the cashew tree, the msasa tree") since a number of other lexical choices were possible (mahogany for *acajou*, and kapok or ceiba for *fromager*). A noteworthy example of Cratylian relationship is given below. The pain, sweat, and blood are echoed even more forcefully so in Katiyo's translation, namely in the tongue twister in the first part of the sentence:

> The women's headscarves, tied as thorn-crown on the bristled hair, thorn-hair and iron plaits, to protect them from the scorching sun, could not stop the abundant crop of blood and sweat harvested by the domestic gods […]. (14)

> Et ce n'étaient pas les **f**oulards des **f**emmes noués en couronnes d'épines autour des têtes hérissées, cheveux de ronces et tresses de **f**er pour se protéger contre les **s**cies d'un **s**oleil d'en**f**er qui arrêterait l'abondante moi**ss**on de **s**ueur et de **s**ang, récoltée par les dieux domestiques […]. (20)

Another case in point of Cratylian realization is found in the excerpt from *La carte* below where Kakatika's decreasing morale is sonically reflected in a paronomastic chain (*désabusé*/*délabré*/*délavée*) as well as rhymes and assonances in [a] permeating the whole sentence. The translated passage is less efficient in terms of suggesting a continuous decrescendo.

> It was therefore with a **h**eavy **h**eart, in a state of prostrat**ion**, disillus**ion**ed, with empt**y**, weary gestures, that **K**a**k**at**i**k**a** spo**k**e, in a voice as blan**k** as **d**evastated **d**awn. (33)

> Aussi était-ce la mort dans l'âme, dans un état de prostration extrême, désabusé, le cœur et les gestes vides, les gestes las, que Kakatika d'une voix blafarde, comme une aube délabrée, une aube délavée, que Kakatika lança […]. (47)

Occasionally, Katiyo's translation choices fall short of reconstructing Adiaffi's sarcasm and double-entendre and deprive passages of the sonic devices that activate specific connotations. A compelling illustration is found in the first passages of the text. Although the translation initiates a momentum-promising alliterative sequence, Katiyo's subsequent translation choices focus on strict referential correspondence, disregarding the formidable sarcasm-inducing power of the two pairs

of derived words (*puante*/*empuantie*; *merdière*/*emmerdante*) in French. This would have been possible with a different choice of adjectives, for instance, something like "apart from the catastrophic, coprolitic, cacophonic name of the commandant", to capitalize on the same alliterative chain.

> **Kakatika**, a nic**k**name he **k**ept. Ah **Kakatika**! Apart from the nauseating, foul, shitty sound of the first two syllables, it means giant monster. (7)
>
> Ah! Kakatika! Outre la sonorité puante, empuantie, merdière et emmerdante des premières syllabes, cela veut dire « monstre géant ». (11)

The last excerpt presented below is another example of translation choice cancelling the connotations carried out by paronomasia although resourcefully establishing other connections through sound.

> The **s**acred time of my lost identity, which has been **s**tolen, destroyed during my **s**leep. The long **s**leep of oblivion. The long deadly sleep! O **mumm**y! O **mumm**ies' **mem**ory! (50)
>
> Le temps sacré de mon identité perdue, volée, violée, durant mon sommeil. Le long sommeil de l'oubli, le long sommeil mortel! Ô momie! Ô mémoire de momie! (68)

Adiaffi's paronomastic pair (*volée*/*violée* [robbed/raped]) enjoys a two-pronged significance: from a macro-perspective, it brings together common practices of appropriation in colonial history – theft and rape – while a close reading establishes a connection with a similar passage from *D'éclairs* in which the very same pair is implemented as shown earlier. Alternative options to stolen/destroyed include the pairs "robbed/raped", "raided raped", and "defrauded/desecrated" (which would echo the preceding "sacred").

To better establish the extent to which Katiyo embraced Adiaffi's stylistic sophistication, I analyzed a sample chapter, selected for its abundance in the devices discussed above. My methodology is similar to the one implemented in Chapter 1. It consisted of independent readings of the original and its translation, which allowed me to identify the specific techniques displayed in each text, followed by a systematic recording of said sound patterns. Since repetition represents the core motif of *La carte*, I recorded all forms of repetitions, not least because I wanted to understand how Adiaffi's translator recreated said motif. I selected *La carte's* fifth chapter to establish statistical data because this chapter offers, both in the original and the translation, the highest density of sound patterns.

Table 7. Recording of sound patterns in "Chapitre 5" of Adiaffi's *La carte d'identité*

Paronomasia and phonic chiasmus	28
Alliterations and assonances	28
Lexical repetitions	15
Syntactic parallelism	12
Internal rhymes	9
Morphological derivations	5
Tongue twisters	2

Table 8. Recording of sound patterns in "Chapter 5" of *The Identity Card* (trans. by Katiyo)

Paronomasia and phonic chiasmus	8
Alliterations and assonances	17
Lexical repetitions	12
Syntactic parallelism	9
Internal rhymes	1
Morphological derivations	3
Tongue twisters	2

Table 9. Re-creation of sound patterns by Katiyo

Paronomasia and phonic chiasmus	29%
Alliterations and assonances	61%
Lexical repetitions	80%
Syntactic parallelism	75%
Internal rhymes	11%
Morphological derivations	60%
Tongue twisters	100%

As shown in the excerpts discussed above, Katiyo embraced Adiaffi's sonic writing and integrated it in her translation project. The numbers presented above establish that the motif of repetition, which relies primarily on lexical repetition and syntactic parallelism, was carefully carried out by the translator, with an 80% and 75% re-creation rate, respectively. However, Katiyo downplayed paronomasia and phonic chiasmus, which represent Adiaffi's hallmark. This observation prompts a number of comments. Firstly, let us remember that paronomasia is the most sophisticated of all sound patterns because of the cognitive and emotional responses it triggers. As such, paronomasia not only represents a critical mechanism supporting *La carte*'s sarcastic tone, but it epitomizes Mélédouman's most sophisticated weapon to demonstrate his artistic mastery of language to the colonial powers. Secondly, paronomasia is the most frequently used sonic device implemented by Adiaffi – a

rare enough phenomenon in "fiction" writing to be worthy of mention. Last but not least, paronomasia relates to the Akan practice of word compounding, which chains word together and channels similar cognitive response. For all these reasons, it represents a noteworthy sound motif within the larger motif of repetition.

To further put into perspective Katiyo's translation, let us briefly examine the reception of Adiaffi's writing. In 1992, African literature scholar Susan Gasster offered the following review of *Silence, on développe*:

> The texture of this book is also **heteroclite**. It combines the plot and characters of a traditional novel with lyrical reflections, free verse, theatrical dialogue, short story, and fragments of an epistolary novel**. Adiaffi's use of language is anarchic. He makes puns in the midst of dialogue about serious political questions as if the very sound of the words distracted him from the larger issue.** […] **Adiaffi's novel is difficult reading. His prose is distracting and wordy.** His characters clearly serve as political voices and his thesis is constantly in evidence. The book has occasional moments of the truculent energy that is inseparable from horror in works by Sony Labou Tansi or Monenembo, of the immediacy of Sembene Ousmane. For the most part, Adiaffi is heavily present as a profound humanist. This scholar's novel invites comparisons with other works of poetry, fiction, and philosophy including those of Adiaffi himself. (Gasster 1994: 1101. Emphasis mine)

Gasster's vision reflects how literary critics for a long time perceived what African literature *should* be: *serious* issues should not be written in a *distracting* manner ("as if the very sound of the words distracted him from the larger issue"). In that regard, Adiaffi's writing may have been challenging to those who were unable to relate to the much larger meaning of the sonic architecture and interpreted it as mere anarchy. Despite an unfavorable context, one can safely state that Katiyo challenged many conventions in bringing out a translation overall concerned with sound and understood Adiaffi's overarching motif of repetition.

1.6 Another poetics of repetition and its translation: Queneau in English

Among other 20th century fiction writers who used repetition as a motif is French author Raymond Queneau. In this section, I examine how Queneau's motif has been framed by critics, and how his translator, Barbara Wright, dealt with it. Although the point belabored here is not to compare works as different as Adiaffi's and Queneau, I focus on one motif and its various realizations through the lens of translation in its quality as magnifying glass that reveals the "original" text in its most nuanced articulations and shows how micro-decisions taken by translators relate or not to the writer's larger agenda.

As French literature scholar and Queneau expert Claude Debon explains, Queneau shared similar concerns about generic categories:

> Le roman pour Queneau est ou plutôt doit être un poème. Non pas une sorte de poème en prose poétique, ce qui impliquerait une « inspiration » et un contenu qui restent problématiques, mais un poème à forme fixe, avec de fortes contraintes structurales et les effets de réitération propre à ce genre. Le roman-poème est long, le poème court : voilà toute la différence. 'For Queneau, the novel is or rather has to be a poem. Not a kind of poem in poetic prose, which would imply a problematic "inspiration" and content, but a fixed-form poem, with rigid structural constraints and iterative effects that are typical of the genre. Poem-novels are long, and poems are short: that is all the difference.' (Debon 1989: X)

Queneau himself pointed to Joyce to frame his approach to novelistic writing:

> Le moins qu'on puisse exiger du roman, c'est qu'il possède un relief, ce qui ne peut s'obtenir que par les vertus même du nombre. […] Cette façon de voir [la technique du roman] est née en grande partie de l'influence qu'a eu sur moi – et sur d'autres – James Joyce devant le génie duquel je tiens à m'incliner ici. 'The least one can demand of the novel is that it possess a relief, which can only be obtained by the very virtue of numbers. […] This approach [to the technique of the novel] is to a large extent due to the influence that James Joyce had on me – and others – to whose genius I would like to pay tribute here.' (Queneau 2002b: 1244)

The following excerpts are taken from *Le chiendent* (1933), Queneau's first novel, and *Les fleurs bleues* (1965),[83] which was written thirty-two years later. Interestingly, while the iterative motif was expressed timidly in *Le chiendent*, it became a full-blown project in *Les fleurs bleues*. Both texts were translated by British literary translator Barbara Wright as *Witch Grass* (2003) and *The Blue Flowers* (1967), respectively.

> Ich bin la tempête qui hurle avec les loups, l'orage qui fait rage, l'ouragan qui dépouille ses gants, la tornade qui reste en rade, la bourrasque qui s'efflasque, le cyclone sur sa bicyclette, le tonnerre qui tète et l'éclair qui, lui, luit (*Le chiendent*: 244)

> Ich bin the storm that howls with the wolves, the tempestuous tempest, the blizzard that blitzes the lizards, the hurricane that hurries you into your coffin, the gale with its hail, the cyclone on its bicycle, the thunder with its icicles, and the lightning that lights life. (*Witch Grass*: 308)

Wright turned to the same paronomastic technique that Queneau implemented with the following clusters: *tempestuous*/*tempest*, *blizzard*/*blitzes*/*lizard*, *gale*/*hail*,

83. I used the 2002 edition of *Le chiendent* (2002a) and the 2006 edition of *Les fleurs bleues.*

hurricane/*hurries*, *cyclone*/*bicycle*/*icicles*, and *lightening*/*light*/*life* ("lightening" and "light" are also an instance of morphological derivation).

> J'inspirais les trouilles nocturnes et les poltronneries diurnes. […] J'étais la chiffonnière avorteuse, la maquerelle véroleuse, la portière lyncheuse
> (*Le chiendent*: 245)

> I used to inspire nocturnal dastardy and diurnal poltroonery. […] I was an aborting ragpicker, a pox-promoting procuress, a lynch-promoting janitress.
> (*Witch Grass:* 308)

In this second example, Wright turned to alliterations in [p] and tongue-twisters (*aborting ragpicker*/*pox-promoting*) as a response to other devices used by Queneau, such as rhymes (in *-urnes* and *-euse* in Queneau's text, echoed by rhymes in *-y* and *-ess* in Wright's), internal echoes and phonic chiasmus (***tro****uilles*/*pol****tro****nneries*; ***avor****teuse*/***véro****leuse*).

> Hagarde, Lamélie le regarde. […] Lamélie, hagarde, le regarde. […] Lamélie fit demi-tour et voulut fendre le flot de la foule en file. (*Les fleurs bleues*: 1014–115)

> Lean and languid, Lamélie gives him a look. […] Lamélie, lean and languid, gives him a look. […] Lamélie turned on her heel and tried to carve a clearway through the queuing crowd. (*The Blue Flowers*: 36–37)

In Lamélie's example above, Queneau's strategy rests upon two devices: paronomasia at the beginning (*hagarde*/*regarde*) and alliteration in [f] in the last sentence. While Wright responded with an overall alliterative tactic, in [l] at the beginning and [k] at the end, she also managed to create a sophisticated response to Queneau's paronomasia with her "lean and languid" while strengthening the alliteration in [l].

> Ils avancent en silence.[84]
> Dans le silence obscur, ils avancent.
> Dans l'obscurité silencieuse, ils continuent d'avancer.
> Sans cadence, ils avancent, la corde se balance et la lanterne aussi, c'est toujours le silence. […] Le duc avance en silence, la corde se balance, l'abbé suit de confiance, la petite lumière aussi se balance […]. (*Les fleurs bleues: 1117*)

> They advance in silence.
> In the dark silence, they advance.
> In the silent darkness, they continue to advance.
> As if in a trance, they advance, the rope starts to prance, so does the lantern, the silence is enhanced. […] The Duke advances in silence, the rope prances, the Abbé follows in a trance, the little light also prances […]. (*The Blue Flowers*: 165–166)

84. Original layout.

Linguistic kinship between English and French sometimes makes the translator's task easier. "Silence" is the exact same word in both French and English while "avancer" and "advance" are a conveniently close match. The remaining items in Queneau's paronomastic chain (*cadence*, *balance*, and *confiance* in Queneau's text), however, demanded much more creativity to sustain paraonomasia in the translation (*trance*, *prance*, and *enhanced* in Wright's). Let us notice here that Wright sacrifices referential meaning for the benefits of restituting sound structures ("sans cadence" is translated as "as in a trance" and "c'est toujours le silence" as "the silence is enhanced"), and, by doing so, challenges mainstream assumptions about the axis of meaning in translation.

> Horrifié par ces propos, se signa le héraut. […] Le héraut n'arrêtait pas de se signer. […] L'horrifié héraut terrifié, après s'être maintes fois signé, rétrograda du nombre de pas nécessaire pour disparaître de la vue du Duc d'Auge.
>
> (*Les fleurs bleues*: 1019–1020)

> Horrified by theses utterances, the herald crossed himself. […] The herald went on crossing non stop. […] The horrified terrified herald, having crossed himself numerable times, retrogressed the number of paces necessary to disappear from the sight of the Duke of Auge. (*The Blue Flowers*: 42–45)

Here again, linguistic kinship comes in handy: Queneau's paronomastic chain based on "horrifié", "terrifié", and "héraut" is handily recreated in Wright's text with "horrified", "terrified", and "herald". What is more, Queneau's alliterative device in [s] initiated by "se signa" and its morphological variations is also facilitated by "crossed" and its own variations. However, the alliterative motif is slightly enhanced in Wright's translation.

While it is true that doing justice to Queneau's and Wright's artistry would require additional comments, such an analysis would probably take us to far. Instead, I suggest focusing on Queneau's core motif. Queneau's techniques can on many accounts be likened to the ones implemented by Adiaffi, namely an extensive use of paronomastic techniques and morphological derivation (*avancent*/*avancer*/*avance*; *silence*/*silencieuse*; *obscure*/*obscurité*), which are closely related iterative devices. As established above, Wright's meticulous translation choices unarguably reflect Queneau's iterative sonic motif.

What is more critical to point out is that Queneau is part of the French canon, and that scholars, including Anglophone scholars (see Kogan 1990), have sacralized his exuberant writing and rhetorical devices. Debon claims that Queneau's poetics needs first and foremost to be said ("d'abord à dire") and to be heard (1989: XVIII), and that Queneau enjoyed the word for the word's sake, which contrasts starkly with Gasster's criticism toward Adiaffi's own writing ("as if the very sound of words distracted him from the larger issue"). Even puns – usually despised by critics – turn into a noble device when implemented by Queneau.

In the introduction to *The Flight of Icarus* (1973), her translation of Queneau's *Le vol d'Icare*, Wright suggests that "with Queneau, every word is there for a purpose" (1973: 7) all the while admitting the challenge they pose in translation: "the exercise […] of trying to match them in English is in itself amusing, and challenging" (1973: 3). In the same introduction, Wright reveals her meticulous approach to translation:

> [The translator] has to analyse everything à fond, strip all these pages of black marks on white paper down to their bare bones of semantics, overtones, undertones, euphony, rhythm, 'internal rhymes'. (1973: 7)

In her introduction to the translation of *Pierrot mon ami* (1988),[85] Wright foregrounds once more the importance of tone and rhythm in Queneau's texts. More specifically, she insists on repetitions, which she qualifies as "intentional". While Wright acknowledges heterogeneous components in Queneau's writing, she deems them perfectly organized. Overall, the celebration of Queneau's language exuberance contrasts with the reception of Adiaffi's. For Wright, who started her career as a professional musician, translating or accompanying someone on the piano were two parts of the same approach. It is hardly surprising that Wright was also Pinget's translator, whose experimental writing owed a lot to sound with a penchant for recurrences and repetition, and with whom she organized read-aloud sessions (Wright 2004). While the fact that Wright devoted an important part of her career translating many a surrealist writer is undoubtedly the result of several converging circumstances, her trained ear should not be dismissed too quickly as it allowed her to immediately resonate with the celebration of language and intricate patterning that was the hallmark of surrealist writing.

The point I intend to make with the examination of Queneau in translation is, firstly, to contrast the reception of his texts (whose sonic devices played an important role in the making of Queneau's writing), to that of Adiaffi's and, secondly, to highlight the connections between the reception (and perception) of a source text and its treatment in translation. The more canonized the author, the more the author's style is idolized and becomes the focus of utmost attention on the part of the translator. What is more, one needs to keep in mind the longstanding lack of recognition of poetics as a fundamental component of African literary arts, which I established in Chapter 1. These observations help us understand how a given translator's project may already be pre-shaped or facilitated and how, contrastingly, other translators have to carve their own project exclusively off their intimate dialog with the text. This discussion will be pursued in the next chapters.

85. Queneau's text and Wright's translation bear the same title.

2. Hove's politics of repetition

2.1 Socially committed writer and translator

Chenjerai Hove was born in 1956 in Mazvihwa, in the then British Colony of Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. His first texts – poems and short stories written in his native language Shona – appeared in anthologies: *Nduri Dzorudo* (1978) and *Matende Mshava* (1980), respectively. His subsequent publications were written in English: three poetry collections (*Up in Arms* 1982, *Red Hills of Home* 1985, *Rainbows in the Dust* 1998), and three novels organized in a trilogy (*Bones* 1988, *Shadows* 1991, *Ancestors* 1996). With many essays, fiction works and poetry collections, some of which earned him awards and fellowships, Hove was considered a prolific writer[86] and one of the founding figures of modern Zimbabwean literature. He became the first president of the Zimbabwe Writers Union in 1984, and one of the founding board members of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Association in 1990 (Chan 2005). His first novel, *Bones*, won the Noma Award for Publishing in Africa in 1989 and was the 1988 Winner of the Zimbabwe Literary Award. Hove's social commitment is closely reflected in his works, and his trilogy more specifically points to his sensitivity to the daily life of the rural population while also addressing systemic injustice at the time of the colony and in traditional Zimbabwean society. Hove lived in exile in various Western countries from 2001 until the time of his death in 2015 in Norway. His works have been translated in many languages, including Shona and Ndebele.[87]

Hove's trilogy (*Bones*, *Shadows*, and *Ancestors*) was translated into French by Jean-Pierre Richard as *Ossuaire* (1997), *Ombres* (1999), and *Ancêtres*. Richard also translated one of his essays and some of his poems, including "Sunk"/"Coulé" and "Soil"/"Terre", which were published in the journal *Babel heureuse* (2002). A translation studies scholar, academic, and prolific translator,[88] Richard translated about thirty works from African authors, mostly from Southern Africa, namely by Alex La Guma, Miriam Tlali, Njabulo Ndebele, Ivan Vladislavic, Nadine Gordimer, Mandla Langa, Sello Duiker, Chenjerai Hove, and Adam Shafi (from the Swahili) (Richard 2005a: 7). Like Hove, Richard is an engaged scholar and was the president of the French anti-apartheid movement. His theoretical scholarship and practice

86. Hove died in 2015 while in exile in Norway.

87. Shona (Hove's native language) and Ndebele are two Bantu languages spoken in Zimbabwe.

88. Richard was the director of the *DESS* graduate program in professional literary translation at Université Paris 7. He has translated over 50 books (source: https://www.idref.fr/029001285, accessed July 12, 2018).

as a professional literary translator are documented in a series of articles that help understand his approach to Hove's style.

Hove had his own view on translation and insisted on its artistic dimension:

> Translation is an art in itself. As an artist, the translator becomes as much part of the text as the original creator of the text. In other words, the two, author and translator, meet in the text in order to create something new called a translation. […] In order for that marriage of texts to happen, the translator has to wear many shoes in his or her imagination. he [*sic*] has to translate the author's texts as well as other silent texts, which, if he listens attentively, he will be able to hear deep down in the original text. (2005: 75)

Hove's take on the specific and central role of the ear in translation, as introduced above in his contention that the translator needs to *attentively listen* to the original text in order to *hear* other *silent texts* in the original, is articulated more specifically in the following passage from the same article. In what follows, Hove's expectations as to how the translator should attend to the sonic dimensions of a literary work is evidenced in the lexicon deployed in the passage ("sounds", "echoes", "resonating", "rhythms and sounds"). Understanding Hove's strong position toward the role of sound in translation provides an essential primer to fully engage with the elaborate sonic architecture of *Ancestors*, whose excerpts will be discussed later in this chapter.

> As an art, translation requires that the translator immerses himself or herself into the literary work in so many different ways. The sounds of the original language and even its echoes and suggestion in the distance, all have to be translated. […] I am talking of what one could call resonating with the text to be translated. […] There is creative translation just as there is creative reading. The creative reader/translator also drowns himself or herself in the text to a point when those rhythms and sounds of the words of the original text begin to appear in the new, receiving language. (Hove 2005: 75–76)

Hove's metaphors ("immerses", "drowns") recall both that of Spivak's ("I *surrender* to the text when I translate" 2000: 398. Emphasis mine) and the alternative interpretation that Nouss and Lamy[89] suggested for Walter Benjamin's translator's *Aufgabe*, as an "*abandon*"/'surrendering' completing its original interpretation as 'task'. For Hove, translators need to immerse themselves in the text until they develop some sort of artistic osmosis with the author, which allows them to hear the text and reactivate its sound structures. If such a vision may seem demanding, even idealistic, it is also clear that Hove considers the translator as a full-fledged creator. In lieu of

89. See "L'abandon du traducteur" (Nouss and Lamy 1997), an alternative and annotated retranslation in French of Walter Benjamin's "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers" (1955).

the concept of equivalence, Hove prefers to use that of harmony, pointing out that "every sentence of the original text has its own pace, rhythm, discords, harmonies and disharmonies, which should be part of the translation" (2005: 76). And if the translator is unable to resonate with the relief of the text, the result will be "'a dried piece of meat' of a translation: breathless, bloodless, juiceless" (*ibid.*). What Hove means by harmony seems to include a Cratylian reading, which envisions a text as intrinsically united in its sonic and semantic dimensions: "whenever I read some Indian poetry aloud, I cannot help hearing the sounds of the river Ganges hidden in the intricacy of the words and the way they are sequenced" (*ibid.*). It helps, suggests Hove, if his translator has some knowledge of the Bantu language or its linguistic context. While his Japanese translator spent time in Zimbabwe to become familiar with the local culture and learn some Shona, Hove realizes the impracticability of such a demand. Yet he suggests that familiarity with the Other can be gained through a "thorough exchanges of notes, faxes, and emails" (*ibid.*).

Hove's approach to textuality and translation is matched by Richard's. Without being superimposable, their visions seem to echo each other. At the beginning of his career as a translator, Richard admits having been inclined to embellish the text. A conversation between Albanian writer Ismael Kadare and his translator, in which Kadare explained the workings of his rugged syntax typical of the Albanian Highlands, induced a shift in Richard's approach and made him more attuned to the stylistic signature of his authors, even if it sometimes implies pushing the limits of the French language (in Tervonen 2003). Richard, however, approaches the concept of "African writing" cautiously. Without denying the specificity of texts written by African writers, Richard is more concerned with identifying their originality:

> Je lis les auteurs africains parce que je trouve chez tous un certain esprit par rapport à la langue, une certaine flamboyance. 'I read African authors because I find in all of them a certain relationship to language, a certain flamboyance.' (*ibid.*[90])

According to Richard, Hove's texts are neither written in Zimbabwean English nor Shona, nor are they an English translation from the Shona, even though his writing draws on all three. First and foremost, Hove's writing is singular. As such, Richard's concern is to create a writing in French that will echo what Hove's writing is doing.[91] To match Hove's unique writing, Richard tries to create his own in-betweenness in French, "un ailleurs"/'an elsewhere', which is – to his own admission – easier as French audiences are nowadays much more willing to embrace texts that do not conform to the norm than they were thirty years ago. Publishing houses and

90. Online article. No page number.

91. Richard refers specifically to "équivalence dynamique"/'dynamic equivalence' in that he tries to recreate the same *functions* in his translation.

editors, however, can at times show some reluctance toward unconventional texts unless said unconventional texts are part of a specific canon as was established in the section devoted to Queneau. Richard signals that African literature remains the poor relative in literary translation (in Tervonen 2003).

In a 2005 article, Richard discussed the specific motif of repetition in Hove's novels. At first sight, this motif appears to be problematic in French because:

> Parmi les multiples figures de répétition repérables dans l'original, un tri s'impose au traducteur : tenant compte à la fois du fonctionnement linguistique de l'anglais et de traditions littéraires plus ou moins tolérantes de certaines répétitions, il n'a en vérité à recréer, dans sa langue, que les effets des seules figures constitutives d'une écriture. 'Faced to the multiple devices of repetition identifiable in the original, the translator has to make a selection taking into account the specific workings of the English language and literary traditions that are more or less accepting of certain repetitions. He actually only needs to recreate, in his language, the effects of those devices that are an integral part of a specific writing.' (2005b: 113)

Palpable here is an allusion to conventions, the same conventions Richard claimed needed to be transgressed in translation. Outwardly, the above claim seems problematic in that it ignores specific literary movements (surrealism, to name but one) and West African writers of French expression such as Kourouma and Adiaffi, among others. The rhetorical nature of Richard's introductory statement becomes however clear as he proceeds to explain the necessity to espouse Hove's iterative writing, which he defines as permeating the entire structure of his texts. Hove's motif of repetition is everywhere, claims Richard: in the sound, lexicon, syntax, rhythm, tropes, and even in the narration (2005b), yet it proves more challenging to establish if some of these recurrences are intrinsic to the English language (which is more amenable to repetition than French) or participate in a specific style. The translator's task, then, is to identify the relief of the iterative motif in the text. Interestingly, Richard approaches the motif of repetition in Hove's *Ancestors* in a visual way, namely as a land surveyor. This is evidenced in Richard's metaphorical lexicon: relief, geodesy, level mark, height, horizontal plane, topographer, earth's surface, sea level, landscape, boulder. Hove's sound-based metaphors to describe style and textuality – voices, silent, listens, hear deep down, echoes, sounds, resonate, resonance, rhythms and sounds, harmony, discords, pace, disharmonies, hearing the sounds, hidden sounds, children songs (Hove 2005) – are echoed spatially by Richard.

In the second part of his article, Richard tells us more about the saliences of the motif. While Ancestors is saturated with lexical repetitions ("la saturation du texte hovien s'opère par un ressassement du lexique"/'the saturation of the Hovian text proceeds from an endless repetition of the lexicon' 2005b: 115), which produces

a rhythm that chants the narration, regulates its flow, shapes its breathing, and structures the reader's expectations (*ibid*.) Such a rhythm can only be recreated by implementing the same level of lexical concordances, which means to systematically translate every occurrence of *child* with *enfant*, every occurrence of *sing* and *song* with *chanter* and *chanson*: "quand la répétition fonde une rythmique, la traduction des éléments sera commandée par des impératifs de rythme"/'when repetition induces a rhythm, the translation of individual components is driven by the demands of rhythm' (Richard 2005b: 116). Richard revisits the level of acceptance he attempted to define earlier, claiming that the threshold for perceiving repetition varies depending on the literary tradition. An interesting counterexample from Victor Hugo's *Quatre-ving-treize* allows Richard to point to the near complete license enjoyed by authors (I would argue: especially authors from the canon) in terms of repetition, which contrasts starkly with the minimal leeway bestowed upon translators who would be castigated for doing the same. However, suggests Richard, this threshold of perception is not absolute and if repetition is identified as a motif, it should be interpreted as an encouragement for the translator to engage in another reading, one focused on said motif. Another type of repetition can occur in the narration itself, as a narrative device. In *Ancestors*, it takes the form of multiple intertextualities, including connections with Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and the myth of cosmic creation.

In the section below, I present the essential aspects of Shona poetry. It is useful to point out that, unlike most of the other writers discussed in this book – with the exception, to a lesser extent, of Nuruddin Farah whose first work was written in Somali – Chenjerai Hove wrote and published both in Shona and English.

2.2 Formal structures of Shona poetry

In his analysis of the development of Shona poetry, African sociolinguist Herbert Chimhundu (1989) points out that, until the 1960s, its written form was mostly influenced by Western structures and intended for an elite. The integration of the rhetorical devices of repetition typical of Shona oral poetry is attributed to Kumbirai and Hamutyinei, two leading Shona poets. One of the alien formal devices mentioned by Chimhundu is Western versification, which twisted the rhythmical flow of sentences and induced phonological incongruities with the result of obscuring the intended message. Shona's linguistic structure, he argues, is not really compatible with metrics:

> Since the beginnings of words carry more informational weight or more meaning than their ends in Shona, one would expect initial linking to be a much more prominent feature of Shona verse than rhyme. Furthermore, given the phonological

> structure of the language, one would expect to find assonance rather than rhyme as another prominent feature of Shona poetry. Similarly, because the class affix system is so important in Shona morphology, one would expect to find that Shona poets use alliteration, not rhyme, as a significant device. The basic point being made here is that the linguistic features exploited in poetry differ according to the language structure. (Chimhundu 1989: 26)

An interesting parallel between Shona oral praise poetry and the rhetorical devices of Old English poetry was established by Carter (1974) who however pointed out that alliteration is linked to the linguistic structure of Shona, a characteristic that does not apply to (Old) English. Indigenous Shona poets make extensive use of alliterations, assonances, and linking[92] (which consists in the iteration of the end of a sentence in the next one). The main devices implemented to sustain repetition and memorization can be summarized as syntactical parallelism, linking, and sound repetitions, which includes assonances and alliterations. The following excerpts from a poem by Kumbirai (in Fortune 1971: 44) illustrate the technique of linking:

> Chawanzwa
> **Chawanzwa** usaudze **mukadzi**
> **Mukadzi** idare rinoti ngwengengwe
> **Chaanzwa** achiridza kwese.
> **Chawanzwa** usavanze **murume**
> **Murume** idare risingamborira
> **Chaanzwa** charamba kurira.
> 'What you have heard
> *What you hear* never tell *a woman*
> *A woman* is sounding metal
> *What she hears* ringing out everywhere.
> *What you hear* never hide from *a man*
> *A man* is metal that never rings
> *What he hears* does not resound.'
> (Translation and emphasis by Fortune 1971: 44)

Examples of parallelism are given below:

> Mune meso anenge etsinza, anoendaenda.
> Mune meno anenge mukaka, akachena semwedzi wechirimo.
> Mune mhuno yakati twi, kunge mutswi weduri.
> 'You have eyes like the oribi's, bright with life.
> You have teeth like milk, white as a winter moon.
> You have a nose that is straight, like the stamper in a mortar.'
> (Translation by Fortune 1971: 47–48)

92. A synonym for linking is linkage. They are interchangeably used in the literature.

The combination of the different devices creates "verses" in Shona, defined by Fortune as "any combination of lines, which shows evidence of internal structure" (in Chimhundu 1989: 28), where internal structure points to the principle of regular sound recurrence.

2.3 *Ancestors*, or the art of embedding repetitions

Published by Picador in 1996, *Ancestors* is the last novel in Hove's trilogy. The narrative articulation of the text, which recycles other stories, merits a few comments. The novel is divided in three parts successively told by different characters, starting with *The Hearer Hears of Fathers* – told by the father – followed by *Women*, and *Children*. Each of them further divides into different sections. While the first subsection is of chronological and historical order (*1850 – Birth of a Deaf-and-Dumb Child*; *1960 – Father (The Hearer Hears)*), the second subsection consists in vignettes of varied length[93] devoid of headings. The theme of the book is that of voice, in its physical and metaphorical sense, and the story opens with the birth of a death-and-mute girl, Miriro, whose condition is immediately interpreted as a malediction bestowed upon the family, possibly by their ancestors. Miriro's mutism takes a larger metonymic meaning later in the book, as a woman having no say in her life, married away to a drunkard, and ending up committing suicide. One century later, young Mucha, one of the descendants in Miriro's family, starts hearing a voice, that of Miriro, and seeing her in his dreams. Through Mucha's voice, Miriro's long hushed story is unmuted. With this narrative thread, Hove offers an exploration of censorship and an account of those many women without any voice, any say, any representation. The voice, in its acceptation as vocal organs, pointing, in turn, to the audible or mutism, is staged in an impressive lexical frenzy (*voice, voiceless, hearer, hear, silence, without words, missing yell, rousing noise, shrill voice, speak, sing, song, shout, loud, echoes of the song of the choirs, those who care for words*, etc.), especially in the sections focusing on Miriro. The epitaph to *Ancestors* sets the tone:

> To the many silent stars of the sky
> To my mother, Jessie,
> the one who remembers
> but keeps silent. (*Ancestors*, no page number)

The constant contrasting dialog between voice and muteness, the audible and silence, is efficiently foregrounded in this short passage narrated by Mucha:

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93. Their length varies from half a page to up to sixteen pages (Richard 2005b).

> She was one vast silence which speaks in its silence. I am only the hearer to these words, a traveller who dreams about arriving, listening to this bird lost in its flight of the night many years after Miriro died. She is now a voice that comes and goes as it wills, with no respect for any barrier. She is a dark voice full of joy and sadness, telling its story, my story, our story. […] Born deaf and dumb, a baby girl, weak and fragile, wordless, what was I to do? she says into the unlistening ears. I, Mucha, the hearer of endless tales, stories to which I belong but could not assist in making, I was not part of that memory until I was born to be a mere hearer, sitting down there under the cool shade of a tree […]. (11–12)

The lexical iteration that Richard pointed out is anything but trivial and is not confined to the semantic fields of silence and voice. Richard's reading points to the larger concepts of performance and founding narratives and rituals that need to be performed by each generation for the sake of cultural sustainment. Narrative repetition, suggests Richard, is performative and takes on an ontological function (2005b: 121).

2.4 The workings of iterative poetics: From *Ancestors* to *Ancêtres*

The main components of melopoeia in *Ancestors* echo very closely those implemented in Shona poetry, including assonances, alliterations, linking, and parallelism. The first two sentences of the novel set the tone:

> SHE FACED THE **EARTH** without words, this child who was **b**orn, once upon a **birth**. A girl without words, so unlike those who sang to their lovers the songs of the tickling of the heart, the songs which told the **birds** and the wild animals that people and the life of the wild were the same, singing songs to stir the love chords of their lovers […] (3)

Sonic associations in this short passage are so numerous and complex that visual formatting such as bolding and underlining cannot adequately be used. What is particularly interesting is how one word serves as an axis to many others: while *birth* rhymes with *earth*, it alliterates with *born* and is further echoed by *birds* in a paronomastic chain. Techniques of morphological derivations (*sang*/*songs*/*singing*/*songs*; *lovers*/*lovers*/*love*) and syntactical parallelism (*without words*) powerfully participate in the sonic architecture and are remindful of Adiaffi's, although their function is quite different as sarcasm is completely absent from Hove's text. The iterative motif is at times more discreet but not less efficient in bringing out parallels, as in "She was **born** without a history of her **own**" (3) or in "The waiting itself became a **thunder of thunder**, a **burning yearning**" (6), loudly contrasting with Miriro's silent universe. Complex passages in the vein of the opening paragraph of the book are shown below, bringing out several of the techniques discussed above:

> 'What is the meaning of all this?' the midwife, a woman who was spent with words, wondered, her mind gnawed away by it all. Then the baby had growled, beast-like, a subdued beast coming into the world of strong men and women. (4)
>
> Burdens of life, she heard herself say in the silence of the early morning dew, her words settling on the dew like dust. She felt the sting of the cool dew under the bare soles of her feet, sweet, but ticklingly painful. (5)
>
> The ears of the small children hear the whispers among the women, the mothers. You see the morning faces of the women wrinkled in the distance. (23)
>
> You think how sa**d** it is to **lie** there and **die** in the morning **dew**, watched by little birds, which fl**y** past in the harsh sk**y**, running after invisible butterflies and insects. (25)
>
> Fire burns wood to ashes and smoke. Huge trees are reduced to a patch of ashes along the footpath. Words burn hearts and minds to a valley of desires. Words in the air. Words in the heart. Words, which transform the body to a huge pile of thirst. The clouds get nearer to the bleeding fingers of the hearers when words spill on their attentive ears. (24)

The excerpt from p. 24 shown above is structured around lexical repetition (five *words*, two *burn(s)*, two *heart(s)*, two *ashes*) and includes multiple iterations and variations with assonances in [a] and paronomasia (*patch/ashes/path; wood/words*). Parallelism (*Words in the air. Words in the heart*) participates in a binary rhythm like in this other example:

> A thick voice and a thin voice **drown** in your **dreams**, in the **sounds** of what has always been nameless and will remain so for ever. (25)

What appears clearly in Hove's text is that lexical and syntactical repetitions or parallelisms lay the framework for additional sound repetitions and variations on their themes, something that also holds true for Adiaffi's text. *A thick voice and a thin voice* in the above excerpt, which is one of many other examples, puts the readers in a centripetal state of mind and orients their reading toward the sonorous actualization of the text. In other words, the parallelism that opens the sentence conditions the readers, orients their attention, and creates specific expectations. Further connections, such as the ones anchoring *dreams* in *drown* and *sounds* in *drown* above, are enabled by the parallel structure that starts the sentence. The section from which the above sentence is excerpted is remarkable for its density of sound connections, a density verging on frenzy or even saturation, to draw on Richard's metaphor[94] (2005b). This additional passage provides another illustration of the saturation that characterizes this particular section:

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94. Richard qualifies *Ancestors*' particular aesthetics as one of saturation, "une esthétique de la saturation" (2005b: 115).

> A whirlwind of fireflies floods your sky. A dream? Is it the one you will remember for many years? A whirlwind of fireflies floods the sky, all the maize and rapoko fields, flooded with a firefly the size of a hill. Many fireflies at first. […] On the maize stalks. On the rooftops. Fireflies that fly and do not make any noise. Silent wing of fire. Silent body of tiny glowing flames. (*Ancestors*: 25–26)

In some passages, circularity is induced by morphological derivation, which allows the final *unsaid* to echo the initial *not said* below:

> She had **not said** a word or **sung** a **song** of the **s**orrows of her heart the previous night. She had just died and left all words **unsaid**. (144)

Richard's meticulous analysis of *Ancestors*' iterative motif, as discussed earlier, is reflected in his translation. While the following passages taken from *Ancêtres* do not systematically match the ones from *Ancestors* presented above so as to highlight Richard's own re-creations of the motif, the first excerpt corresponds also to the opening lines of the book:

> Elle était là, face au **m**onde, sans **m**ots, cette enfant, cette **n**ouveau-**n**ée, au temps lointain d'une **n**aissance. Une fille sans mots, si différente de celles qui chantaient à leurs amoureux les **ch**ansons du **ch**atouillis du cœur, les **ch**ansons qui disaient aux oiseaux et aux bêtes sauvages que les êtres humains et la vie sauvage, c'était pareil, des **ch**ants pour faire vibrer les cordes de l'amour chez leurs amoureux. (19)
>
> Et avec les nuages de **soie**, je **tisse tous** ces mo**tifs** de **joie** et de **tris**tesse. Mais aussi j'ai envie de pleurer, de joie et de tristesse, à cette découverte. (19)
>
> Face à la **terre**, avec ses **termites** et ses **termitières**, elle gardait un silence retenu. Face aux éclairs, face au tonnerre rugissant, elle lançait le silence du défi. Et face aux vents aussi, elle restait silencieuse […]. (20)

The sophisticated progression enabled by *terre*, sonically embedded in *termites*, which is itself also sonically embedded in *termitière*, is another of Richard's independent creations, building on a less remarkable chain ("She faced the earth, with its ants and anthills" [*Ancestors*: 4]). Like in *Ancestors*, assonances are prominently staged, up to representing the central sound thread. The following passage stages silence in a deafening abundance of sound connections in which [ɑ̃] brings together *enfants* and *mamans*, *silence* and *manque*, *enthousiasmant* and *strident*, and where *attente,* (*tonitruant(e)* and *ardent(e)*), melts into *entendre*.

> **Silence**. Le profond **silence** d'un cri qui **manque**. A chaque **silence** s'attachaient l'explosion d'un tonnerre, un bruit **enthousiasmant**, une voix **stridente** cachés derrière l'imaginable. **L'attente** elle-même se faisait tonnerres **tonitruants**, désir **ardent**. La sage-femme aurait voulu entendre les pleurs des **enfants**, les berceuses tristes des **mamans**. (22)

Reading the translation without referring to the original allowed me to identify passages that are not sonically marked in the original. A good illustration of the advantages of this methodology is given in the excerpt below in which alliterations combine with various assonances and internal rhymes to echo the murmur of the narrative while also bringing out its vivid images and colors:

> Le lendem**ain**, quand vient le **mat**i**n**, il est plein de **m**ur**m**ures. Le ciel est rouge et d**ur**. L'air est traversé de **murm**ures. Et de **c**ris. Le soleil est rouge, comme en colère. Ton père est couché dans l'ombre **m**atinale de l'arbre **m**usu**m**a. (107)

The same section ends with another charged passage:

> Je veux rompre ce **f**ilet de **f**euilles et de li**an**es ou s'empêtrent mes jambes, mon **âme**. Je veux les d**é**chir**er**. Les mettre en pièces. Me sauv**er**. **É**chapp**er** à cette toile d'araign**é**e. Le bétail ! Le bétail ! Toute ma richesse emport**é**e par le **fl**ot du **fl**euve en crue. N'y aura-t-il donc personne pour me porter secours ? Au secours, quelqu'un ! Une profonde cicatrice entaille le nuage là-haut dans le ciel. Au loin. (107)

Once again, discreet alliterative blocks serve to associate clusters of chaos in the narration and the destructive *flot du fleuve* inconspicuously brings back the tangle of the *filet de feuilles* above. In the corresponding passage in Hove's *Ancestors*, images are orchestrated with similar alliterations (*flowing/flooded*), assonances (*leaves/creepers/pieces*) and other sound variations (*scar/cloud/sky/far*). Less full-blown realizations are nonetheless potent. The alliterative chain in "Née sourde et muette, fille, **f**aible et **f**ragile, qu'étais-je censée **f**aire?" (*Ancêtres*: 29) ("**B**orn **d**eaf and **d**um**b**, a **b**a**b**y girl, weak and fragile, what was I to do?" [*Ancestors*: 12]) brings together *fille*, *faible*, *fragile,* and *faire* in an associative chain that enacts the narration.

The systematic recording of sound patterns in *Ancestors* and *Ancêtres* focused on the section titled "1960 – Father (The Hearer Hears)", which has the highest density of sound patterns both in the source text and the translation. The data obtained will allow me to engage in a larger discussion encompassing the first part of the chapter devoted to Adiaffi's text and its translation by Katiyo.

Table 10. Recording of sound patterns in section "1960 – Father (The Hearer Hears)" of Hove's *Ancestors*

Lexical repetitions	50
Alliterations	31
Assonances	23
Paronomasia and phonic chiasmus	21
Internal rhymes	14
Syntactic parallelism	14
Morphological derivations	9
Linking	5

Table 11. Recording of sound patterns in section "1960 – Le père (Celui qui Entend Entend)" of *Ancêtres* (trans. by Richard)

Lexical repetitions	**39**
Alliterations	34
Assonances	26
Paronomasia and phonic chiasmus	12
Internal rhymes	10
Syntactic parallelism	15
Morphological derivations	8
Linking	4

Table 12. Re-creation of sound patterns by Richard

Lexical repetitions	**78%**
Alliterations	110%
Assonances	113%
Paronomasia and phonic chiasmus	57%
Internal rhymes	71%
Syntactic parallelism	107%
Morphological derivations	89%
Linking	80%

The data presented above confirms Richard's absolute commitment to the overarching motif of repetition deployed by Hove. In light of Richard's article (2005b), the reenactment of lexical repetitions and parallelism comes as little surprise. Not clearly articulated in the article though was Richard's sensitivity to the sound structures of the text, as his metaphorical take on the text was rather of a visual order, even though Richard hinted at its performative function. A closer examination of each of the above categories testifies to his meticulous engagement with the various sonic devices implemented by Hove. Among all the translators whose works have been examined so far, Richard is in fact the one who listened the most closely to the sound physiognomy of the text. He even managed to recreate over half of the paronomasias, which represents the most challenging of all these techniques while also the most powerful one because of the cognitive and affective responses it triggers.

Katiyo's translation calls for a few additional observations that go beyond the scope of statistical recordings and pertain to the density of her implementation of sound patterns. As mentioned earlier in the presentation of the methodology used for the recording, individual sound patterns are counted as one occurrence of said pattern, regardless of the number of words concerned in the passage. If one takes alliterations as an example, then an alliterative chain drawing on eight consonants

would count as only one occurrence of alliteration, just as another alliterative chain drawing only on four consonants. The parallel presentation of excerpts from *The Identity Card* and from Adiaffi's *Carte* does justice to Katiyo's sustained efforts to generally recreate the same density of sonic connections. Overall, Katiyo delivers a performative text and reenacts Adiaffi's general motif of repetition by implementing his techniques to varying degrees. Her translation may be less potent, however, in terms of recognizing and re-creating paronomasia as Adiaffi's most specific device or sub-motif, as it were, and thus canceling the motivations underlying their implementation. One of these motivations points to Akan literary arts, which seem to have represented an important source of inspiration for Adiaffi, up to their specific poetic forms. The second motivation directly pertains to the use of paronomasia in *La carte* as an essential element that not only participates in its sarcasm but also constitutes Mélédouman's most sophisticated weapon to demonstrate his linguistic and artistic mastery of French to the colonial powers.

One can only point out the very different circumstances underlying Richard's and Katiyo's respective translation projects. As I mentioned in my introduction to *The Identity Card*, it is most probable that Katiyo worked on Adiaffi's text without benefiting from any critical apparatus. Adiaffi did not enjoy the status of a canonized writer, and his writing had not yet been analyzed in terms that would have guided his translators. Richard's systematic treatment of the contour of Hove's motif points to his analytical approach that he documented in a scholarly publication, which, in turn, relates to his long experience as a literary translator, translator of African literatures, and translation studies scholar.

CHAPTER 4

Sound motifs and their motivations

This chapter concerns itself with the sound aesthetics implemented by Ghanaian author Ayi Kwei Armah, who writes his works in English, and Algerian author Assia Djebar, who published her texts in French. While it would have been tempting to examine Armah's text together with Adiaffi's for the simple reason that they both share the same Akan oral literary heritage, Armah's text is not characterized by repetitions. Rather, his implementation of sound is reminiscent of Djebar's. Beyond displaying similar patterns in their respective texts, an important feature common to Armah and Djebar is their activism and how both see their texts as subverting colonial discourse. While Armah's main concern is in line with Fanon's thought and focuses on the alienation of Black people in the face of white oppression, Djebar's take on colonialism is rooted in her position as an Algerian woman.[95] Paradoxically, both Armah and Djebar have been criticized for their writings or positions and looked upon as traitors by their fellows. The strongest criticism pointed at Armah came from Achebe (1975, 1976) who qualified Armah as an "alienated writer" and "alienated native", and *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* as a "sick book" (1975: 25–26).[96] Djebar's detractors took issue with the fact that she wrote in French:

> Dès qu'on est francophone, les intégristes vous disent : « Ah, elle parle français, donc c'est le parti de la France ». C'est ce qu'on ne disait pas tout de suite après l'indépendance. Avec le fascisme, on donne aux langues des qualités et des défauts.
> 'If you are Francophone, fundamentalists exclaim: "Oh, she speaks French, so she supports France." This is not what people said right after the independence. Fascist thought attributes virtues and flaws to languages.' (Djebar 1997: 20)

Linguistic conflicts such as the one pointed out above have been discussed at length by Djebar and Armah. More specifically, it forms one of the narrative threads in Djebar's *L'Amour, la fantasia* and is briefly hinted at in Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, as will be shown in his chapter.

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95. Djebar took issue with the label "feminist" as it points to a mostly Western conception that fails to do justice to other realities.

96. Further criticism came from Kibera (1979) and Nolim (1979).

1. When polemics overcast poetics: The case of Ayi Kwei Armah

1.1 Understanding Armah

Ghanaian novelist and cultural activist Ayi Kwei Armah was born in 1939 in Sekondi-Takoradi, then Gold Coast, now Ghana, in an Akan family speaking Fante[97] (Ogede 2000: 6). His body of works meticulously reflects his preoccupation with Africa's political and cultural crises. More specifically, Armah's novels and essays represent a vocal campaign for deconstructing Africa's alienation to colonialism, old and new, especially the legacy of Western education. The twenty or so articles he published between 1960 and 1986 (Wright 1989: 310–311) delve into themes such as Frantz Fanon's propositions, the application of Marxist theories to Africa, and the issue of language in Africa, which he proposed to solve with the implementation of Kiswahili as Pan-African language (Armah 1985b). His criticism of those he terms "false intellectuals" and literary critics at large is reflected in an article titled "The Lazy School of Literary Criticism" in which he advises critics to engage in a close reading of his works instead of requesting interviews with the aim of confirming ready-made conclusions (Armah 1985a).

After studying literature and social sciences at Harvard, Armah worked as a translator for the magazine *Révolution Africaine* in Algeria before returning to Ghana in 1964 where he worked for Ghanaian public television. His works include seven novels and six short stories, which he published in various magazines such as *Présence Africaine* or *Harper's Magazine*. *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1984, ©1968), whose spelling becomes intelligible only toward its last pages, is Armah's debut novel, and also the one that was the most translated. It was followed by *Fragments* (1970a), *Why Are We So Blest* (1972), *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973) and *The Healers* (1978). His last novels, *Osiris Rising* (1995) and *KMT: In the House of Life: An Epistemic Novel* (2002) followed a long silence in terms of novelistic writing. While Armah did not publish works of poetry,[98] poems are occasionally found in his novels, such as *Fragments*.

Critics have largely focused on Armah's cutting stances, radicalism, and occasional pessimism (Ogede 2000: 1) and offered a highly political reading of his novelistic works. Paradoxically, Achebe is one of those who openly recognized the literary value of *The Beautyful Ones*: "it is a well-written book. Armah's command

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97. Fante is one of the formal literary dialects of the Akan language. Agni, Adiaffi's native language, and Fante are part of the Kwa linguistic group and belong to Niger-Congo languages (Africa's largest language family).

98. He published one poem, titled "Aftermath", in the anthology *Messages: Poems from Ghana* (1970b).

of language and imagery is of a very high order indeed" (1975: 25), together with Aidoo who qualified it as "an intellectual exercise executed with formidable precision" (1973: 15). Among the monographs devoted to Armah (Fraser 1980, Todd 1982, Wright 1992 and 1989, Ogede 2000, Whyte 2003), only Wright's considers the issue of style at some point, suggesting some connections with the larger framework of oral literatures. Curiously, both Whyte (2003) and Ogede (2000) announce in their respective introductions that they will examine Armah's style, yet fall short of engaging with the topic altogether. Ogede points to Armah's use of language devices as liminal zones between poetry and prose that ravish the readers "as a result of the demonstrable power of language, form, and imagination" (2000: 5) without developing his claim any further. In his analysis of *Two Thousand Seasons*, Wright presents the novel as the kind that "a griot would have written if he had access to literary form" (1988a: 97). What Wright means with "literary form" is in all probability "written form", a terminology already loaded with the kind of binary ideology that is particularly unhelpful when engaging with African literatures. A further examination of Wright's dismissive take on oral literary arts and its "problematic" reenactment in the novel confirms this suspicion:

> The basic problems created by *Two Thousand Seasons* are formal, aesthetic ones. The oral tale is designed to be said, not read – to be declaimed, not decoded – and its greatest strength seldom survives its transposition to written form. […] Armah strains to reproduce an illusion of orality and, specifically, of vatic utterance through a formidable battery of rhetorical questions, lamentations, frenzied alliteration – "This is no hurried hustle hot with sweaty anticipation" (p. 158) – and portentous-sounding adjectivally-launched inversions. […] Traditionally, oral narrative edits itself by recantation and cancellation, never by omission – once something has been said, it exists ineradicably – and is apt to convey emphasis quantitatively rather than qualitatively: by the frequency rather than the manner of expression. The failure in economy, translated into written form, leads inevitably to rhetorical redundancies and to what, in novelistic terms, is some of Armah's most unreadable writing. (Wright 1988a: 97–98)

While lexical and syntactical repetitions – both hallmarks of oral storytelling – do not constitute a motif in *The Beautyful Ones,* they are progressively introduced in *Fragments*, and a defining trait of *Two Thousand Seasons*. However, Wright's analysis is unsatisfactory on many counts. Firstly, oral literary arts can hardly be reduced to oral tale; secondly, rhetorical devices used in oral literatures have long been implemented, successfully at that, in written literature; thirdly, said devices are not the sole prerogative of oral literatures even though they have specific values that may be lost on many readers. What is more, the alliterative frenzy that Wright frowns upon is even more convincingly illustrated in *The Beautyful Ones*. However, it is true that *Two Thousand Seasons* is Armah's most direct attempt at reenacting a

traditional form of narration, something that cannot be said of the more modernist and economical writing exhibited in *The Beautyful Ones*, a move that Whyte also emphasized when he commented on the dichotomized and Manichaean take of *Two Thousand Seasons* compared with the subtler writing of the first novel (Whyte 2003). While Wright tentatively engages with Armah's writing in *The Beautyful Ones*, where "the dazzling inventiveness and exuberant hyperbole of the griot are more in evidence" (1988a: 99), he fails to develop on said inventiveness and exuberance. Rather, Wright identifies the connection to Armah's Akan cultural heritage in terms of symbols, namely in the cyclical interpretation he makes of the metaphor of ingestion and digestion that structures the novel (1989: 81–137).

1.2 Articulating oral literatures in Armah's works

In his overview of African literatures (1974, 1975), Armah offered a detailed commentary on their artistic and aesthetic value in terms that point to the educational mission of griots. The artistic abilities of these "holders of the word", as griots are referred to, are to serve the larger message that needs to be transmitted. For Armah, analyzing a work's specific aesthetics represents but a way to understand its conditions of production and the social realities it points to (Armah 1974). Establishing a distinction between oral and written literatures in Africa is hardly helpful and participates in obfuscating that they share a common history and were at one point complementary (Armah 1985c). Armah's deep engagement with Africa's literary heritage participates in his much larger agenda to rehabilitate African culture against centuries of Western brainwashing. "I had long a sense of myself not simply as an Akan, an Ewe, a Ghanaian and a West African, but most strongly and significantly as an African" (Armah 1985d: 1752). As part of his staunchly anti-Western ideology, Armah regularly reasserts that the inspiration for his works is to be found exclusively in African culture and that establishing any connection with Western writers would constitute pure fiction (Armah 1978 and 1985a).

1.3 Armah's translators

As discussed above, Armah's works have been commented on nearly exclusively for their ideological and political value, as a prolongation to his life as a vocal Pan-African activist. As a consequence, critics have shown little interest in his writing or aesthetic endeavors, notwithstanding a few comments from Wright that I discussed earlier. Armah's debut novel is also the one that generated the highest number of reviews and his most translated novel, not only into languages of high circulation, such as French and German, but also into Gujarati, Oromo,

and Swahili.[99] *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* was translated into French by Josette and Robert Mane as *L'Age d'or n'est pas pour demain* (henceforth *L'Age d'or*) and published in 1976 by Présence Africaine, a pan-African publishing house founded in Paris in the aftermath of WWII by Senegalese scholar Alioune Diop in the wake of the Negritude movement. Josette Mane also translated Ngũgĩ's *Petals of Blood* as *Pétales de sang* (1985), *My Mercedes is Bigger Than Yours* by Nigerian novelist and poet Nkem Nwanko as *Ma Mercedes est plus grosse que la tienne* (1983), as well as Kenyan Henry R. Ole Kulet's *Is it Possible?* as *Lérionka, écolier Masaï* (1987). A founding member and former Chair of the *Société d'Étude des Pays du Commonwealth*, Robert Mane was a professor of Anglophone African literature at Université Paris XII and edited, with Adrien Huannou, a critical essay on Paul Hazoumé's *Doguicimi*, a masterpiece of African literature. In his essay devoted to American writer Hamlin Garland (1968), R. Mane indicates his sensitivity to the musicality of Garland's text up to the minute details that participate in its construction:

> Les exercices du vendredi dans la chapelle du *Cedar Valley Seminary* auront profondément marqué le style de Garland. Un passage comme celui-ci révèle, à l'examen, une véritable construction symphonique. La répétition de *mother*, *soul*, *life*, *pantry*, *cellar*, si efficace soit-elle, joue sur la structure binaire qui prévaut dans l'ensemble du paragraphe. Et surtout, leur dentale finale, reprise dans les participes passés, amplifiée dans des combinaisons telles que *never-ending … drudgeries* ou *deadens* and *destroys*, se combinant avec les palatales et les multiples sifflantes, traduit, autant et mieux que les mots pris en eux-mêmes, la terrible monotonie de cette vie. Que Garland ait le sens et le goût des allitérations, le premier venu de ses poèmes nous en convaincrait ; mais la prose offre d'aussi bons exemples […]. 'The exercises performed on Fridays in the chapel of the Cedar Valley Seminary profoundly marked Garland's style. An examination of the above passage reveals a veritable symphonic construction. The repetition of *mother, soul, life, pantry*, is not only efficient but also plays on the binary structure that runs through the paragraph. What is more, the past participles' final dental, amplified in combinations such as *never-ending … drudgeries* or *deadens and destroys*, and combined with palatals and many sibilants translates, as well as if not better than the words in themselves, the terrible monotony of this life. A mere look at any of Garland's poem will undoubtedly show his sense and taste for alliterations, but his prose also offers good illustrations […].' (Mane 1968: 518)

R. Mane's conception of sound lays bare his Cratylian view, in other words, his belief in the capacity of sound to suggest or mimic semantic meaning:

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99. Source: www.worldcat.org (accessed July 16, 2018).

> L'intention est évidente, l'auteur veut reproduire les sourds craquements de la glace, le gazouillis des oiseaux, et il y réussit. 'The intention of the author is obvious, he wants to reproduce the muffled sounds of ice cracking, the chirping of birds, and he succeeds.' (*ibid.*)

In short, what strikes R. Mane in Garland's writing is his particular connection to nature, which constitutes the raw material for his texts, and the singular auditory sensuality that allows him to depict it.

In another of his critical essays, *Henry Adams on the Road to Chartres* (1971), Mane discusses translation issues drawing on Adams' English translations of French medieval texts, which he compares with other translations. His comments start with traditional notions, such as literalness and truth before addressing more specific questions, namely the possibility of re-creating or not assonances and the relevance of translating hexameters in *The Song of Roland* (1971: 190–191). In his appraisal of Adam's translation, Mane commends his stylistic choices, which result in "a translation cleaving to its model and retaining its essential movement, if not its music" (1971: 91).

1.4 A cacophony of senses: Splendor and decline in *The Beautyful Ones*

Armah's symbolic and highly charged first novel can be articulated as an acerb criticism of post-independence revolutions in general and N'Krumah's regime in particular. The novel stages the efforts of the main protagonist, generically named "the man", to resist the growing corruption in his country. The man's honesty and patience feed his resilience yet contrast with a world that has abandoned every moral principle. His wife and mother-in-law blame him for his meager resources as an employee of the Ghana Railway Corporation and point with envy to the life-style of his former classmate Koomson, an overfed and decadent minister in the corrupt regime, until the day of the military coup, which has Koomson find refuge at the man's house. The narrative thread of corruption is amplified by a powerful metaphor of decomposition that runs through the text. *The Beautyful Ones* has consistently been qualified as a realistic novel, not least because of Armah's vivid descriptions and powerful – sometimes crude – visual vignettes powered by his incisive writing, all contributing in creating a strikingly bleak atmosphere. What further emerges from *The Beautyful Ones* is a peculiar, metaphorical and textual staging of the five senses, starting with the olfactory sense that sustains the metaphor of ingestion/digestion throughout the text, but also the sense of touch – especially in the first chapter – and that of hearing. In this "organic" text, the olfactory turns into a full-fledged character that echoes the overarching theme of corruption. Allusions to hearing, whose symbolic value is at first sight less striking, however create another

semantic network with regular instances of *sound*, *noise*, *silence* and other lexical variations that culminate on page 38 with *irritated sound, voice, abrasive tone, wire voice, another sound, a voice, hollers, repeats the words in a whisper*, and page 163 with *corrupt thunder, thundering throat, choking sound.*[100] Often personified, sound turns at times into a threatening protagonist or source of pain as evidenced in the series of examples that follow. Sounds kill (a), arise from reproaches (b), are sharp and piercing (c), painfully evocative (d), aggressive and loud (e), and plaintive (f). Sounds evoke complaints (g) and constipation (h), or prick like a needle (i).

(a) Sounds arise and kill all smells as the bus pulls into the dormitory town (40)

(b) But when the reproach of the loved ones grow into sound and the pain is thrown outward against the one who causes it […]. (46)

(c) Sounds like the swift bumps of waves hitting returning waves, pierced by other sounds, high, sharp, and very brief. Then the sound of a song hurriedly crossed and returned to. (50–51)

(d) It was a very slow song, though every hole in it was filled with sounds that said too painfully much to the listening ear […]. (51)

(e) When it stopped a male voice, huge like a eunuch amplified, burst the air with a hollered sound that kept its echo long afterward, a vibrating '… ericaaaaa!' while underneath the aggressive, scrambled loudness of music from across the ocean took over the room. (61)

(f) The driver of the long truck on which the bags are piled sings a plaintive song, and the sound, coming from such a man, surprises the listener completely. (112)

(g) The old woman sat down in an armchair, letting out a whole series of sighs that sounded like complaints unspoken. (129)

(h) He was trying to speak like a white man, and the sound that came out of his mouth reminded the listener of a constipated man […]. (125)

(i) Koomson seemed to shrink from this human voice wanting to know who was out there, as if each sound, immediately it was uttered, had formed itself into a needle and was pricking his skin. […] The man knocked again, trying to make the wood sound gentle and reassuring. But the silence inside had become absolute. (173)

Contrasting with the above staging, other vignettes offer a vision of sound that brings out its soothing abilities and occasionally points to music. In the next series of excerpts, sounds convey smoothness (m), softness and prosperity (k), are

100. See also pages 9, 15, 16, 23, 24, 26, p. 40, 41, 43, 94 139, 147, 158, 159, 165, 176, and 178.

inaudible (j) or close to silence (n), a substance to be savored (l), or melodious and happy (o).

(j) A sea gull, flying low, makes a single hoarse noise that disappears into the afternoon, and the white bird itself flies off in the direction of the harbor and its inaudible noise, beautiful and light on its wing. (113)

(k) […] and with a soft sound of prosperity the car poured itself down the night […]. (139)

(l) The words 'Upper Residential Area' and 'Esikafo Aba Estates' had come dancing out of her mouth […] [she was] savoring the sound. (140)

(m) The car sped smoothly along the coast road. Its own smooth running mixed with the soft sounds of the sea flowing over the sands.[101] (150)

(n) He was alone now. Whenever he found himself alone and became aware of his loneliness, it was in the form of a particular sound. The sound was a high-pitched note, almost too high to be heard, and in fact audible only because what was in the ear could not be the sound of complete silence, wondering whether he could make it change and sound louder by concentrating on it. Then the telephone rang and he answered it, breaking the lonely sound. (156)

(o) After a while the image itself of the flower in the middle disappeared, to be replaced by a single, melodious note. […] a bird with a song that was strangely happy. (183)

1.5 Motifs and motivations

It is unfortunate that critics have focused their analysis of *The Beautyful Ones* on the sole scatological metaphor enabled by the many creative references to excrements in the book[102] (whose parallel with Nkrumah's regime created so much controversy) for the devices that Armah deploys in the novel operate on a much grander scale. The staging of sonic stylistic devices, for instance, intensifies to become flagrant in key passages of the novel, imparting them with a formidable efficiency, namely in Chapter Thirteen. A clue to Armah's peculiar use of sound is found in his subsequent novel, *Fragments*, when main protagonist Baako writes a script for the Ghanavision Corporation that opens with:

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101. This example illustrates how the narration of sound combines with sonic structures, especially alliterations.

102. Aidoo (1973), Kibera (1979), Nnolim (1979), Wright (1988b, 1989: 81–137, 1992: 5), Griffiths (1992: 78), Agho (2003).

> THROUGH REPETITIVE USE OF IMAGE AND SOUND IMPRINT IDEA OF VIOLENCE, UNPLEASANT, STRONG, IRRESISTIBLE, ATTACKING THE VIEWER, INVADING HIS EYES, ASSAULTING HIS EARS. […]
> MATCH SHARP SOUNDS WITH ABSTRACT IMAGES OF AGENTS OF THIS VIOLENCE […] (*Fragments* 1970: 207. Original layout and font)

Paronomasia and alliterations are the predominant patterns in *The Beaufyful Ones*. Other sound patterns such as repetitions, internal rhymes and tongue twisters are marginal at best. Chapter Thirteen is both the densest chapter in terms of sound patterns in the original text and the key moment in the novel when the regime is overturned by the military after a coup. At first sight, it appeared as the most relevant section for conducting my systematic recording. However, I added a second chapter to the recording because Chapter Thirteen was not the densest in terms of sound patterns in the translation. Chapter One, which presented a high number of occurrences both in the translation and the original, was hence included to the systematic recording.

1.6 The efficacy of aural devices in *The Beautyful Ones*

Chapter Thirteen recounts the demise of (ex-)minister Koomson who, within a couple of hours, moves from opulence to clandestinity, from pristine and perfumed sheets to the collective latrines of the man's shabby neighborhood. The organic metaphor of ingestion/digestion culminates when Koomson is literally digested by the latrines themselves in his ultimate efforts to escape the military. The crude descriptions of Koomson-turned-animal stuffing his face and stinking under the effect of panic acquire a formidable efficiency through the intensification of sound effects. Rushing on the food offered to him, Koomson emits "**g**reat **g**rateful **g**asps" (164). He "**s**ighed again, a very long, **s**low **s**igh that **s**poke clearly of his **s**uffering. Even a **s**igh from him **s**poiled the air **s**ome more" (164). Koomson, "**g**rown **g**reasy" and "**f**illed with **f**ear" (162), "**l**ooked at the ho**l**e wait**ing** for h**im** with the power**l**ess **l**oath**ing** of a defeated man" (167), horrified at the prospect of the latrine seat "en**c**rusted with old **c**a**k**ed e**x**crement" (166) as his only escape from the military. "Dis**g**ust came **strongly** into Koomson's face, **struggling** to suppress his earlier resi**g**nation" (168). A high concentration of sonic combinations culminates in a tongue twister toward the end of the following passage, drastically enhancing the evocative force of the metaphor:

> His mouth had the rich stench of rotten menstrual blood. The man held his breath until the new smell had gone down in the mixture with the liquid atmosphere of the Party man's farts filling the room. At the same time Koomson's insides gave

> a growl longer than usual, an inner fart of personal, corrupt thunder which in its fullness sounded as if it had rolled down all the way from the eating throat thundering through the belly and the guts, to end in further silent pollution of the air already thick with flatulent fear. (163)

Throughout Armah's text, alliterations and paronomasia respond to each other to bring out images, parallels, and oppositions. The excerpt below showcases a particularly subtle sonic structure combining paronomasia (*plastered/patterns/paint*), phonic chiasmus (*paint/temp*), and alliteration in [p]:

> For years and years, the building had been **p**lastered at irregular intervals with **p**aint and distem**p**er. […] The flower **p**atterns also had their crusts of **p**aint. (11)

Although the vowel sounds in the phonic chiasmus (*paint/temp*) are dissimilar, the perception of inverted consonants (*t/p* and *p/t)* is facilitated by the alliteration in [p] that creates an expectation and awareness to the sound patterns in the passage. As demonstrated earlier with excerpts from the other texts examined in this book, the paronomastic technique is often used in pairs, as with *went*/*wet* and *belly*/*belch* in this additional example also highlighting pairs of internal rhymes (in bold):

> Koomson felt with a hand for the water. It made a hollow s**oun**d as it went d**own** into his belly, and a wet belch r**o**se from his thr**oa**t. (165)

In fact, paronomastic occurrences abound throughout *The Beautyful Ones*, ranging from simple constructions, as in "the conductor **chided** himself for the **childishness** of his fears" (5), to more extended ones such as "the man in the back **seat** just **sat** and his eyes just **stared** (5). Other noteworthy examples of paronomasia as a stand-alone device or combined with alliterations or other sonic devices in Armah's text include "the man **found** himself rubbing his **thumb** against the **f**inger" (14), "the **darkness** of the place **its**elf m**ist**ed over the **s**h**arp**ness of everything he saw" (24), "then the **sound** of a **song** hurriedly crossed and returned to" (50–51), "[t]he feel of sunlight on **naked neck** just above the **k**ha**k**i **c**ollar" (67), "[m]an**goe**s han**ging** bi**g** and **go**ld, and outside eyes **looking** and **longing**" (68), "a **l**ittle **l**ight on **holes** in the back **walls**" and "give your wife my **love**. The man **laughed** with a **low** sound" (94), "the **growth** of the daily maze on the **graph** sheet" (155), "they had **fought** against the order they **thought** had been overthrown" (157), and "he put his fingers deep into **her hair** and **held** her **head**" (160), to illustrate but a few.

The next excerpts illustrate the different alliterative techniques implemented by Armah in the novel, ranging from simple alliterations based on a single consonant up to crossed alliterations alternating two or more consonants, often in combination with other mutually enhancing devices:

> The engine's **s**mooth **s**ound rose evenly as the car gathered spee**d**, gra**d**ually **d**ying **d**own as the **d**istance absorbed the spee**d**ing vehicle. (9)

> So the **s**ea **s**alt and the **s**weat together and the fan above made this **s**tewy atmosphere in which the **s**uffering **s**leepers came and worked and went dumbly back to homes they had earlier fled. (20)

> Then the **m**ocking rattle of the **M**orse **m**achine **m**ercifully breaking now and then […]. (16)

In the first of those three examples, morphological derivation (*speed*/*speeding*) participate in sustaining sound associations; in the second one, the ostentatious iteration of "and" enhances the worker's repetitive life, a long line of tedious tasks in suffocating working conditions. Interesting to observe is how these sound patternings create rhythm, either regularity or conversely rugged highs and lows – up to tongue twisters that make the readers stumble, should they engage in reading the passage aloud. The third example, the one with the Morse machine, is taken from one of the sections where sound pervades the narration, as evidenced in the "piercing sounds" "blast of car horns", "particular sound", "unending sound within the ear" (15), "captive hearer", "sound like dry paper tearing", and "let his silence swallow up the word" (16). Here is an excerpt from another sonically dense section:

> The car horn **s**plit**s** the air with it**s** new, irritated **s**ound, and the **s**uited man **s**pins in**s**tinctively around, then recovers and **s**ays, 'E**s**tie is in the car' […]. (38)

Not only is *splits* echoed in *its*, but it also bounces back on *spins* with *(in)stinct* and *(E)stie* offering further variations on the sonic theme that structures the sentence. The strategy of combining paronomastic tandems and alliterations is frequent in *The Beautyful Ones* and ranges from discreet implementations to more sophisticated ones:

> The touch of the **b**anister on the **balls** of his fingertips had something uncomfortably organic about it. A weak **bulb** hung over the whole staircase suspended on some **th**in, invisible **th**read. (11)

> They were no longer sharp, the crack**s**, but all rounded out and **smoothed**, **consumed** by **s**ome **s**oft, gentle pro**c**e**s**s of decay. (12)

In both of the examples above, sound parallelisms (*balls*/*bulb* in the first excerpt and *smoothed*/*consumed* in the second one) are sustained by alliterations in [b] and [s], respectively.

Some passages are clearly more sophisticated than others in terms of sonic architecture and hence yield considerably more power to the narration:

> […] a **s**pecies of war carried out in the **s**ilence of long ages, a **s**truggle in which only the keen, uncanny eyes and ears of lunatic seers could detect the dec**e**iving, easy breathing of the **s**trugglers. (12)

Here, "keen" is echoed in "(un)canny", "(dec)eiving" in "(br)eathing", and *eyes/ears/seers* form a paronomastic ensemble with "ears" as its axis. As observed earlier in the excerpt depicting Koomson falling apart in a particularly convincing organic metaphor, a vivid sound syntax orchestrates the key passages of the novel. The following excerpt offers yet another echo of decay and corruption amplified by its peculiar sound patterning aided by the lexical repetition of "hand" that heightens the perception of return:

> Left-hand fingers in their careless journey from a hasty **anus** sliding all the way up to the banister as their **owners** made the return trip […]. Right-hand fingers **s**till dripping with the after-pi**ss** and the **s**tale **s**weat from fat crotches. The calloused palms of messengers after they had blown their clogged noses reaching for a convenient place to leave the well-rubbed moisture. Afternoon hands not entirely **lick**ed **clea**n of palm soup and remnants of **k**en**k**ey. The **wood would** always **w**in. (12–13)

The same alliterative frenzy that literary critic Wright deplored in his review of Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* ("frenzied alliterations", Wright 1988a: 98, quoted earlier in this chapter) is found in a subsequent description of the soiled banister of the Ghana Railway Corporation's office:

> In his **t**iredness i**t** did not ma**tt**er that his thum**b** and the **b**alls of his finger**t**ips were **b**eing **c**lammily **c**aressed by the **c**aked a**ccr**etions on the **b**anis**t**er. (34)

1.7 Pathways to poetic re-creation in *L'Age d'or*

Josette and Robert Mane undoubtedly engaged with the sonic architecture that sustains and amplifies Armah's allegorical narrative. Alliterative constructions abound in *L'Age d'or*, ranging from short alliterative chains up to more complex ones:

> Le receveur se ra**c**la le **g**osier et dé**gl**utit son mu**c**us. (11)
>
> […] sans le moindre re**mor**ds, pour un autre **mo**llard. (13)
>
> Impossible de **c**alculer la **q**uantité d'en**c**austi**qu**e […]. (19)
>
> […] déjà un **v**ocable nou**v**eau, pour désigner la **v**ieille **p**ratique de l'em**pr**isonnement sans **p**rocès. (181)
>
> Dans la **p**énombre, on **p**ouvait à **p**eine distinguer la ram**p**e, **p**areille à une longue bande de **p**eau couverte de **p**ustules. (19)

> Sans aucun doute le chauffeur avait aperçu le témoin silencieux assis au bord de la route, car lorsque l'autobus amorça sa montée pour quitter la ville, il lui fit un sourire et un signe de la main. (207)

A frequent companion to alliterations in the translation are internal rhymes. The passages that follow combine alliteration in [s] and internal rhymes in [œ] and [ã], respectively:

> Le receveur eut peur de ces yeux. Il eut mal au simple souvenir de l'odeur du cédi et ressentit tout d'un coup à l'aisselle une sensation de glace. Était-ce le donateur transformé en observateur, s'amusant de son manège[103] ? (10)

> […] mais les franchit d'un bond en pensant au soleil de son enfance et de son adolescence qui répandait sa douceur sur les champs. (184)

As in *The Beautyful Ones*, occurrences of paronomasia and phonic chiasmus are found in *L'Age d'or*, such as *fer/frais* (51), *passion/passé* (77); *je n'éprouve/je ne trouve* (74), *blanches/planches* (81), *s'applique/réplique* (96), *insensé/sa pensée* (108), *menace/tenace* (122), *incendie/incidents* (128), *immobilité/humidité* (195), and *intonation/invitation* (198). A selection of examples is commented upon below.

> Il allait faire les frais d'une farce cruelle. (10)

The string made of "faire", "frais", and "farce" is a good illustration of a play on sounds that is hard to compartmentalize: while the duo *faire/frais* meets the definition of paronomasia, *farce* and *frais* are probably closer to a phonic chiasmus (which, in itself, is a subgroup of paronomasia that consists in inverting phonemes, as laid out in Chapter 2). The next sentence is another interesting case in point:

> La crainte vague d'un châtiment chemina dans son esprit. (10)

Châtiment and *chemina* probably fall within the phonic chiasmus more than any other category since the series of vowels, [a], [i], and [ã] in *châtiment*, and [ə], [i], and [a] in *chemina* closely echo one another in an inverted order. While the last two examples point to the limit of assigning sound plays to one category to the exclusion of another, it is, however, important to keep in mind that paronomasia, phonic chiasmus and morphological derivations are more powerful devices than alliterations, assonances, and internal rhymes. The combination of paronomasia (*vide/vie*) and morphological derivation (*étrange/étrangère*) in the sentence below stands out immediately:

> Il y eut un vide étrange de deux vies totalement étrangères.

---

103. This example of partial chiasmus (*samu/sonma*) demonstrates the benefits of a reading aloud strategy when analyzing the texts.

Actually, the succession of *vide*/*étrange* followed by another, similar succession (*vies*/*étrangères*) reinforces parallelisms within the sentence. In contrast, the three alliterative [v]s in the following sentence are far less obvious:

> À mesure que le bateau gagnait de la **v**itesse, le **v**ent devenait plus **v**if, plus chargé de l'odeur humide et iodée de la mer. (202)

Yet when alliterative chains combine with other devices such as paronomasia and rhymes, the entire network of sound correspondences becomes strikingly potent:

> À part le bois, il y avait, bien sûr, les g**en**s eux-mêmes ; il y avait t**an**t de mains et de doigts pour aider le bois dans sa **p**rogression vers la **p**ourriture : les doigts de la main **g**auche, **g**liss**an**t né**g**ligemm**en**t le long de la r**am**pe […]. (20)

The sheer plethora of phonic connections in the passage above echoes the frenzy of the many hands and fingers participating in the progressive decay of the wood. A double paronomastic pair (*bois*/*doigts*/*bois*/*doigts*) is further helped by alliterations in [p] and [g] and a long string of internal rhymes in [ɑ̃].

Chapter Thirteen's graphic description of Koomson to which I alluded earlier is re-constructed with similar sound effects in the translation, starting with:

> Koomson se mit à faire des gestes désespérés montrant dans son hystérie **muette**, d'abord la lumière, puis la fenêtre ouv**erte** ; il suait la peur par tous ses pores. (185)

Noticeable is a similar intensification of sound patterns in the translation: Koomson is sitting "juste derrière le **para**vent, au **paro**xysme de la terreur" (185), an exemplar of a "monde **p**iteusement rétr**éci** où le seul s**ouci** des **p**uissants était de **p**ouvoir utiliser la force de tout un **peup**le **p**our se remplir la **p**anse" (186). Koomson's insatiable mouth emits loud noises: "des bruits glout**on**s, les bruits de succ**ion** d'un homme press**é** qui enfourne la nourriture avec voracit**é**" (189). His voracity is soon embarrassingly getting out of control, which forces the man to hold his breath to avoid the stench: "l'homme retint sa respiration pour laisser à cette nouvelle o**d**eur le temps **d**e se **d**issou**d**re **d**ans l'atmosphère **d**éliquescente **d**es gaz lâchés par l'Homme du Parti" (187). The culminating passage from page 163 in *The Beautyful Ones* is echoed in the translation:

> […] du ventre de Koomson, s'écha**pp**a un gargouillis **p**lus long que le **p**récédent, un tonnerre de **pe**ts qui semblaient se ré**p**ercuter depuis sa gorge de bâfreur jusqu'à son estomac et ses entrailles d'homme **p**ourri **p**our s'achever dans la **p**ollution silencieuse d'un air déjà lourd des flatulences de la **p**eur. (187)

Koomson's infamous escape from the military, which takes place in the neighborhood latrine and represents, as it were, the chapter's grand finale, is amplified by a vividly sonic translation as evidenced in the "ballet effréné des **m**olécules de

merdes **m**êlées à des gouttes d'urine[104] sûre [*sic*]" (190) or in the encouragements of the man "–**P**ousse ! hurla l'homme sans réfléchir à la **p**roximité des **p**oursuivants ni **p**enser que de toutes façons son com**p**arse ne **p**ouvait l'entendre" (193) – who is in turn compelled to escape through the latrines with Koomson, amidst cockroaches/"**c**an**c**relats" whose "déje**c**tions se **c**ollaient à ses **c**oudes tandis **q**u'il se glissait à l'intérieur de la **c**aisse" (193).

My observation regarding the striking implementation of sound patterns in the key moments of the narration does not only pertain to those passages foregrounding the text's organic metaphor. On the last page of the novel, the title is revealed to the readers as an oval-shaped inscription lettered on the back of a bus: "In the **c**enter of the ov**al** was a **s**ingle flower, **s**olitary, une**x**plaina**ble**, and very beautif**ul**" (183) echoed in the translation as "Au **c**entre de l'ovale **s**e trouvait une fleur, **soli**-**t**aire, in**solit**e et belle" (207). While Armah's sentence harbors an internal rhyme, I have observed few occurrences of this particular pattern in his text. Conversely, internal rhymes rank among the most frequent patterns implemented by J. and R. Mane. The sentence that ends Chapter One, "The **wood would** always **w**in" (13) implements paronomasia and alliteration and is reconstructed as "La vict**oi**re appartiendrait toujours au b**oi**s" (20) where internal rhymes in [wa] conveniently continue the chain initiated in the same paragraph with multiple instances of *bois* and *doigt* and other *endroits*. Specific instances indicative of the translators' favorite sound pattern are given below:

> Elle se tenait juste devant la porte d'entr**ée** et quand il put distingu**er** avec plus de nettet**é** son visage, l'homme se rendit compte qu'elle était bouleversé**e**. Quelque chose d'affreux semblait l'avoir ébranl**ée.** (184)
>
> C'était une note aig**üe**, presque trop haute pour être entend**ue** […]. (179)
>
> Koomson mangeait dans le n**oir**. On avait de nouveau du mal à y v**oir.** (189)

The translators' preoccupation with internal rhymes becomes more obvious in some of their lexical choices. Armah's "I had seen corruption. Public theft." (58) is rendered by the Manes as "c'était de la corruption. De la prévarication." (70). The internal rhyme in that instance is enabled by a shift in register.

Before proceeding to the statistical analysis, I would like to offer a few comments that shed light on the Manes's translation project. Firstly, the few instances of Ghanaian pidgin are erased in the translation. Secondly, even though lexical repetition does not represent a motif *per se* in *The Beautyful Ones*, as suggested earlier, a number of instances where syntactical and lexical repetitions play a noticeable role in the narration have been equally suppressed. Indeed, the repetitions of "sound"

104. *Urine* echoes *latrine*, which appears a few words down.

and "song" hammered on pages 50 and 51 are rendered using lexical variation in the translation, as *tintement*, *bruit*, *son* for "sound" and as *mélodie*, *air*, *air de musique* et *chanson* for "song" (62–63). Again, repetition in the form of five occurrences of "sound" in a short paragraph on page 156 is avoided altogether and "sound" is rendered in turn as *sonorité*, *ce*, *son*, *bruit*, and *bruit* (179). It is tempting to explain or contextualize such a translation choice with one of Robert Mane's remarks apropos another writer implementing repetitions. In *Hamlin Garland, l'homme et l'œuvre (1860–1940)* (Mane 1968), Mane's critical essay devoted to Garland's life and literary works that was introduced and commented on at the beginning of this chapter, Mane qualifies Garland's occasional repetitions in Garland's *Main-Travelled Roads* as an instance of "stylistic mediocrity" ('médiocrité stylistique', Mane 1968: 516). The following is Mane's example from Garland's text that prompted him to utter such an opinion.

> The speaker was Ed, now a tall and *slouchily*-dressed man of thirty-two or three … He wore a surly look and *lounged* along in a sort of hangdog style … They shook hands and Ed *slouched* down on the *lounge*.
>
> (Garland 1892: 56 quoted in Mane 1968: 516. Emphasis by Mane)

Mane's negative take on Garland's lexical repetitions is all the more striking that he praised other sonic devices in Garland's text, namely alliterations (Mane 1968: 518) and euphonic structures (520).

The French intolerance to repetition was discussed in earlier chapters by Derive (1997) and Richard (2005b). Richard's observation pertaining to literary traditions that are more or less accepting of repetitions and his subsequent claim that such conventions demand to be transgressed in translation[105] (2005b: 113), may be not entirely unrelated to the Manes's approach to translating repetitions in Armah's text. First of all, one needs to remember that their translation was published in 1976, long before repetition started to be recognized as a genuine motif in African literatures. A tentative justification for the implementation of lexical concordance as a key element for inducing rhythm and prosody and ensuring a text's internal logic is offered by theater translator and Shakespeare specialist Jean-Michel Déprats who comments more specifically on the value of repetitions in Macbeth:

> Cette question de la concordance lexicale est une pierre de touche qui permet de différencier les traductions soucieuses de la signifiance d'un texte des traductions contextualisantes qui obéissent à ce que l'on appelle le génie de la langue. […] Les traductions contextualisantes sont certainement tout à fait légitimes pour un texte de pure information (un article de journal), mais ne le sont plus là où la signification est liée à la poétique et au rythme. Le rythme n'est pas seulement de l'ordre

105. See Chapter 3 for Richard's full reasoning based on Hove's text.

de la prosodie, il est aussi constitutif du sens. 'The issue of lexical concordance is a cornerstone that permits to differentiate translations focused on bringing out the significance of a text from contextualizing translations that abide to what is commonly referred to as the genius of the language. […] Contextualizing translations are certainly perfectly justified for purely informative texts (a newspaper article) but are not for texts whose signification is tied to poetics and rhythm. Rhythm not only relates to prosody, it also creates meaning.' (Déprats 2002: cxvi–cxvii)

1.8 The measure of creativity in translation

An immediate interpretation of the above data suggests that internal rhymes, the Manes's preferred technique, may have been used as a compensation for the loss of other patterns. Clearly, internal rhymes have been implemented in a way that is incommensurate with Armah's own use. As in the previous case studies, I will offer more substantial comments at the very end of this chapter to frame the data and my analysis with those pertaining to Assia Djebar's text and her translation by Dorothy Blair.

Table 13. Recording of sound patterns in selected chapters from *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (Armah)

	(1)[106]	(2)	**Aggregate Data**
Alliterations	30	42	**72**
Paronomasia and phonic chiasmus	23	26	**49**
Internal rhymes	8	7	**15**
Lexical repetitions	2	8	**10**
Morphological derivations	3	4	**7**

Table 14. Recording of sound patterns in selected chapters from *L'Age d'or n'est pas pour demain* (trans. by J. and R. Mane)

	(1)[107]	(2)	**Aggregate Data**
Alliterations	25	17	**42**
Paronomasia and phonic chiasmus	11	15	**26**
Internal rhymes	13	22	**35**
Lexical repetitions	2	4	**6**
Morphological derivations	0	0	**0**

106. (1) refers to Chapter One, and (2) to Chapter Thirteen.

107. (1) refers to Chapitre I, and (2) to Chapitre XIII.

Table 15. Re-creation of sound patterns by J. and R. Mane

Alliterations	58%
Paronomasia and phonic chiasmus	53%
Internal rhymes	233%
Lexical repetitions	60%
Morphological derivations	0%

2. The matrix of Assia Djebar's poetic language

2.1 A complex linguistic and literary heritage

Assia Djebar was one of the leading writers from Algeria and has "long been at the forefront of postcolonial debates on gender, identity, and cultural translation" (Helgesson 2013: 203). Djebar's works combine intimate and personal narratives with historical accounts, a combination that the text under study in this chapter, *L'Amour, la fantasia*, epitomizes. Her texts have been translated in over twenty languages, and she received prestigious literary awards throughout her long and productive literary career, including the Neustadt International Prize for Literature in 1996. In 2005, she became the first Maghrebian woman to become a life-long member of the prestigious *Académie française*. Upon receiving her award, Djebar hoped that it would encourage the translation of Francophone writers into Arabic.

Assia Djebar's complicated relationship – conflicting and paradoxical at times – to her multiple languages (French, Arabic, Berber) is an invitation to revisit the notion and statuses of oral and written languages as discussed in Chapter 1. As I suggested, drawing on Fraser's propositions (2007), it is more fruitful from a translation studies perspective to focus on the potential overlapping of and connections between oral and written productions rather than on their ontological differences. Djebar's specific linguistic situation creates an additional opportunity to examine how the different statuses of languages, their respective sphere of usage, and last but not least the affective value attributed to each of them, all contribute to shaping a writer's style. Assia Djebar grew up in a multilingual environment in which only French had a status of written language inasmuch as her experience with written Arabic was strictly limited to Koranic school. French colonial Algeria in which Djebar grew up provided public education in French only and discouraged the use of Arabic. In fact, the transmission of Arabic as a written language was practically forbidden (Djebar 1997: 27), with the consequence that many Maghrebian authors of that generation, such as Khatibi, consider their native language, Arabic, as an oral language (Mehrez 1992). Parallel to her schooling in French, Djebar

attended Koranic school up to her eleventh year – an experience that provided her with a strong memory agility. From middle school onward, she became the only Arabic student, a circumstance that prompted her to become the best at mastering French, the native language of the other students (Djebar 1997: 28). To her bitter disappointment, Djebar never managed to become perfectly bilingual, at least to the point of being able to use Arabic for literary purposes (Djebar 1997: 29). Her experience with languages was further complicated by the parallel use of both Arabic and Berber, which in Djebar's family had a status – whether partially of fully – of oral languages. Djebar's maternal family was Berber, at that time an exclusively oral language,[108] with the result that Berber was reserved for that side of the family and more specifically to women. The notion of "mother tongue" or, rather "mother tongues", to include both oral Arabic and Berber, had a particular significance for Djebar who contrastingly pointed to French both as the tongue of her father and that of her symbolic stepmother ("langue marâtre" [*L'amour, la Fantasia* 1995: 298]). Djebar's father was one of the very few schoolteachers of Arabic origin in the French public-school system and also the one who insisted that her daughter be schooled and continue with her studies, something rare enough at that time. This relatively exceptional situation for an Algerian girl gave Djebar a special status, not only in terms of language, but also on a social level as it singled her out from the other women in her family – a highly gendered group, all veiled and keeping to themselves. Djebar's mother, who at some point had turned her back to Berber after a family conflict, was an educated woman:

> Elle avait ses cahiers de poésie arabe, elle chantait l'arabe classique et elle parlait un arabe dialectal. Lorsqu'on est allé vivre au village, j'ai bien compris que son arabe dialectal était un arabe raffiné qui n'avait rien à voir avec l'arabe des paysans dépossédés. 'She kept notebooks with Arabic poetry, sang classical Arabic and spoke dialectal Arabic. When we went to live in the village, I immediately understood that her dialectal Arabic was refined and had nothing to do with the Arabic spoken by dispossessed peasants.' (Djebar 1997: 22)

This refinement of Arabic to which Djebar refers is reflected particularly vividly in *L'Amour, la fantasia*, namely in the short sections of prose poetry inserted at regular intervals in the text. She commented on her use of a sophisticated language by referring to Arabic poetry:

Et si je dis "tessons de soupirs", si je dis "circe ou ciseaux de cette tessiture", ce n'est pas pour écrire de la poésie savante. C'est parce que je tente de retrouver de

108. Djebar remarks that, while the Berber alphabet was rediscovered in the 19th century, people experienced it as an oral language when she was growing up. For a full discussion on the power relationships between languages in Algeria, see Djebar's interview with Gauvain (Djebar 1997).

possibles vers de la poésie arabe, où la langue fonctionne par allitérations. 'And if I say 'tessons de soupirs', if I say 'circe ou ciseaux de cette tessiture',[109] it is not to write scholarly poetry. It is because I want to recover possible verses of Arabic poetry whose language relies on alliterations.' (Djebar 1997: 24)

While one may legitimately question the apparent opposition between "scholarly poetry" and "Arabic poetry" that Djebar seems to imply, another interpretation framed by her specific relation to Arabic would be to read "written Arabic" as opposed to the Arabic that Djebar received mostly orally and whose aural materiality she highlights eloquently. This interpretation intersects with the analysis given by French literature and aesthetics scholar Mireille Calle-Gruber about Djebar's relation to language and experience with writing, in which she points out that Djebar's poetics should not be interpreted as erudite. Rather, Djebar entirely focused her writing on the sense of hearing, on the physical voice (2005: 72–73). "Il y a, dans les textes d'Assia Djebar, *un toucher de l'oreille* que la langue de poésie sait seule déplier en toutes nuances." 'There is, in Assia Djebar's texts, *a feel of the ear* that only poetic language can unfold in all its nuances' (Calle-Gruber 2005: 73). In short, Djebar's poetics is to be approached as performative and its internal structure is determined by the logos of music, of the singing voice (*ibid.*).

2.2 Situating *L'Amour, la fantasia* in Djebar's work

Published in 1985 by French publisher Lattès, *L'Amour, la fantasia* (henceforth *L'Amour*) is Djebar's fifth novel and eighth work. Although presented as a novel, *L'Amour* conveniently blurs the generic boundaries between historical, fictional, and autobiographical accounts. More specifically, *L'Amour* alternates four types of texts that draw on Djebar's unique position as trained historian: historical accounts of the violent colonization of Algeria told from the point of view of both the Algerians and the colonizer, oral memoirs from Algerian women during the years leading to the independence, her own coming-of-age memories of Algeria during the French colony, and prose poems. Ranging from one to four pages in length, these prose poems interspersed in the text draw attention to their specific status with italic fonts.

Despite the generic juxtaposition of brief accounts of different natures that occasionally challenge the fictional dimension of the work, *L'Amour* is nonetheless a text possessing a striking style. To Djebar, this elaborately constructed and orchestrated text was designed as a project that would reconcile the sounds of her

109. I chose to leave the examples in the French original since their function is to highlight alliterations in [s].

maternal tongue with the written French language (Djebar 1997: 30–32). At the very end of *L'Amour*, she offers a more specific clue: "écrire ne tue pas la voix, mais la réveille, surtout pour ressusciter tant de sœurs disparues" (*L'Amour*: 285)/'Writing does not silence the voice, but awakens it, above all to resurrect so many vanished sisters' (*Fantasia*: 204).

The language issue, obsessive as it were, resurfaces throughout *L'Amour* and allows Djebar to question the respective position, status, and function of Berber, Arabic, and French in her family. It is through the prism of language that she interrogates the role of women in Algerian society at different time periods, from 1830 through to her childhood and on into the independence years. Djebar points in turn to the danger of linguistic exchange and the risks inherent in translation, and to the long cohabitation of multiple languages in Algeria, back to the times when Turkish and Arabic subsided side by side, up to the muted, unarchived voices of Algerian women during the violent repression in the 1830s ("stridulation du chant qui lancine, hiéroglyphes de la voix collective et sauvage" (*L'Amour*: 83) 'cacophony of keening, ear-splitting hieroglyphs of a wild, collective voice' (*Fantasia*: 56)) which contrast with the cold-blooded written assessments by the French colonial power. Very consciously, Djebar highlights language as a tool for social inclusion or exclusion:

> Laminage de ma culture orale en perdition : expulsée à onze, douze ans de ce théâtre des aveux féminins, ai-je par là même été épargnée du silence de la mortification ? Écrire les plus anodins souvenirs d'enfance renvoie donc au corps dépouillé de voix. (*L'Amour*: 223–224)
>
> My oral tradition has gradually been overlaid and is in danger of vanishing: at the age of eleven or twelve I was abruptly ejected from this theatre of feminine confidences – was I thereby spared from having to silence my humbled pride? In writing of my childhood memories I am taken back to those bodies bereft of voices. (*Fantasia*: 156)

There is no clear indication in *L'Amour* as to what specifically set off Djebar's exclusion from the group of female relatives in her household. One possible explanation is that Djebar stopped attending Koranic school after her eleventh year. The argument made in the short section from which the passage above is excerpted (*L'Amour*: 222–24) points to Djebar gradually drifting away from other women because of her continued use of French, a language that enabled her to express herself in the first person ("dire « je »", *L'Amour*: 223). Contrastingly, Djebar suggests that Arabic language conventions did not offer women the possibility to talk about their individual self other than referring to that self as a mere part of a collective entity (223). As established in Section 2.1 above, Djebar had a complex and arduous relation to the three status-defining languages used in her family:

Arabic, Berber, and French. The realization of her gradual estrangement from her native language led her to focus on the sonic materiality of that language and conferred emotional valence to that materiality. Let us remember that Arabic was an essentially oral language to Djebar, a status she invariably insisted on in all her interviews and articles.

Djebar's continuous association of mother tongue and sound, a tongue that was primarily if not exclusively voiced and heard, is orchestrated by an ebullient staging of alliterations that give strength to her statements, such as the "lustration des sons d'enfance dans le souvenir" (*L'Amour: 13*) 'memory purges and purifies the sounds of childhood' (*Fantasia*: 4) and "ces tessons de sons" (*L'Amour*: 235) 'shards of sounds' (*Fantasia*: 165). More importantly, in begging to be heard, Djebar's alliterative writing points to the larger concept of voice, the only element that women could unveil in the Algerian society she describes.

Djebar's conception of orality, however, is paradoxically fluid. At times, she associates orality with the sonic, at others she presents orality in terms of lower social status – as opposed to writing, which she associates with the French colonizers – and in the last instance, she superimposes orality and voice. In fact Djebar uses "orality" (or "oral") and "voice" interchangeably and engages with "voice" in all its accepted meanings, as a token of (non-)agency pointing to the women having no say (no voice) when Djebar was growing up in Algeria, and as audible materiality when, for instance, she refers to the many women raped by French colonizers in the late 19th century whose screams were never captured and hence disappeared from memories. This fluidity at times induces a confusing paradox which is also found here and there in the scholarly literature, especially in those efforts deployed to ontologically oppose orality to writing. Unsurprisingly, the same heterogeneous acceptations are found in Dorothy Blair's introduction to the translation, *Fantasia, an Algerian Cavalcade* (henceforth *Fantasia*), especially in her presentation of the narrative *voices* in the text. To Blair, the antiphon that structures the entire book is based on the opposition between a sophisticated, carefully crafted and poetic writing on one hand and orality, described as plain and informal and associated with uneducated women on the other hand. While I do not challenge the contrast established between the unadorned oral memoir pieces (testimonies by uneducated women) transcribed by Djebar, which correspond to Blair's description (plain, informal, flat, unadorned), and the highly sophisticated and poetic sections of the text, it is necessary to use caution with associations that may appear ontological and perpetuate some die-hard misconceptions. Presenting orality in such a light (as plain and unsophisticated) contradicts other oppositions that Djebar carefully established between a refined Arabic literary heritage that was transmitted orally to her and French as her language of writing. It seems that the contrast introduced both by Blair in her introduction to the translation and by Djebar in many

instances, be it in *L'Amour* or her many interviews and articles, does not challenge the literary value of oral production compared with written production as such, but rather points to the level of education of the women whose oral history was collected and transcribed in *L'Amour*. In other words, the plainness of the language in those sections reflects the language of uneducated women stripped of access to education, whether in Arabic, Berber, or French, who reflect on their traumatic experience during the war of independence.

Another necessary reading grid for approaching this text is, of course, music, starting with the title which can be read in Arabic as *fantaziya* ('ostentation'), the ritual rifle shots associated with ceremonials or triumphs, or in Italian as *fantasia* ('fantasy'), a musical composition whose form is secondary and plays on variations. In its latter acceptation, *fantasia* also points to the repeated motifs of Beethoven's composition, *Quasi una fantasia*, which provides the epigraph to the third part of *L'Amour*.

2.3 Dorothy Blair: A made-to-measure translator

Dorothy Blair translated three of Djebar's novels. After Francis Frenaye translated her debut novel, *La soif* (1957), as *The Mischief* (1958), Dorothy Blair took over with the translation of *Ombre Sultane* (1987) as *A Sister to Sheherazade* (1988), followed by that of *L'Amour, la fantasia* as *Fantasia, an Algerian Cavalcade* (1989), and concluded with the translation of *Loin de Médine* (1991) as *Far from Medina* (1994). Marjolijn de Jager translated *Les Enfants du nouveau monde* (1962) as *Children of the New World* (2005), the collection of short stories *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement* (1980) as *Women of Algiers in their Apartment*, *Le Blanc de l'Algérie* (1996) as *Algerian White*[110] (2001), as well as a poem and an opera libretto. Djebar's other translators include Betsy Wing (*Vaste est la prison* (1995)/*So Vast the Prison*) and Tegan Raleigh (*Oran, langue morte/The Tongue's Blood Does Not Run Dry*).

Dorothy Blair was a professor of French at the University of Witwatersrand, South Africa. Her milestone publications include *African Literature in French: A History of Creative Writing in French from West and Equatorial Africa* (1976), which, in the 1970s, represented one of the most comprehensive study of African literature of French expression (Gardinier 1978), and *Senegalese Literature: A Critical History* (1984). An examination of her critical studies and translations reveals her lifelong commitment to the status of women in Africa. The texts she chose to translate include for instance Awa Thiam's *La parole aux Négresses* (*Speak out, Black Sister*), a denunciation of female genital mutilation, and Berber Algerian Fadhma A. M.

110. *Le Blanc de l'Algérie* was co-translated with David Kelly.

Amrouche's autobiography, *Histoire de ma vie* (*My Life Story*). Blair translated a long list of French language writers from Africa, among which numerous female writers from the Maghreb (Assia Djebar, Aïcha Lemsine, Leïla Sebbar, Fadhma A. M. Amrouche, Gisèle Halimi) and from West Africa, namely from Senegal (Mariama Bâ, Aminata Sow Fall, Naffisatou Niang Diallo). Blair also translated various poems and short stories, including those of Francis Bebey, Birago Diop, Bernard Dadie, Driss Chraïbi, Edouard Maroun et Tchicaya U Tam'si. The latter translations were published in *The Classic*, a critical literary magazine in South Africa in the 1960s that aimed to promote African writers from all parts of the continents.

To better understand Blair's approach to textuality, it is useful to start with her detailed study of Jules Supervielle in which she analyzes the different functions of alliteration in Supervielle's texts (Blair 1960: 139–155), including his "moutons monotones", "vaches vagissantes", and other "col des collines", often combined with paronomastic plays such as "taches de douceur, je veux dire de rousseur" or "d'un gris rosé et pour ainsi dire rusé" (Blair 1960: 147–148). Her concern with poetics is further evidenced in *African Literature in French: A History of Creative Writing in French from West and Equatorial Africa.* Blair insists on the value of poetry and tale in Africa – which she qualifies as its richest literary heritage – to the detriment of novelistic writing whose creativity is undermined and limited by its insistence on social realism (Blair 1976: 25). Drawing on the theory of ethnomusicologist Pepper, Blair claims that the most creative and original productions from the African continent are those adhering the most closely to oral sources as opposed to the novel – an "imported" genre (*ibid.*). Beyond the legitimate reservations one could oppose to Blair's binary approach, her interest for poetic form and oral literature is undeniable and well documented (Blair 1976: 24–83).

Many of Blair's translations are framed by paratextual material in the form of introduction, foreword, glossary, or afterword. They offer precious clues regarding how Blair perceives her authors' writing; more specifically, they stress her constant concern with their style and poetics. In her notes accompanying the translation of the poems included in Amrouche's autobiography, which were translated first from the Berber into French by Amrouche's daughter Taos, Blair deplores her inability to access their original composition:

> I cannot claim that the following verses even approximate to the poetic quality of the originals. In attempting to render into English Taos Amrouche's French translations of her mother's improvisations in the Kabyle language, I am aware that I have no guide to their rhythmic patterns, musicality and intrinsic poetic qualities. (Blair 1989b: 178–179)

These remarks echo her comments in the introduction to Amrouche's translation in which she points to the acute musical ear and innate sense of poetry of the author – qualities also highlighted by Kateb Yacine (Blair 1989a: xii–xiiii).

In her introduction to *L'Amour*, Blair claims that Djebar "is clearly in love with the musicality of French, which she exploits in those passages of prose poetry printed in italics, and in which she makes prose approximate to music, both structurally and sonically." (Blair 1993: no page number). While I challenge the notion that Djebar's intention was to highlight the musicality of French given her clearly specified claim to recreate the poetic sonic structures of Arabic in her French writing, I agree with her long-time translator Marjolijn de Jager that "[f]or the translator of Assia Djebar's writing, the ear must be(come) most instrumental "tool" [*sic*]" (de Jager 1996: 856). De Jager insists again on this indispensable sensitivity in her introduction to *Children of the New World,* her English translation of Djebar's *Les enfants du nouveau monde*.

2.4 Overview of stylistic codes in Arabic literature

Given the richness and vastness of the topic and the space that can reasonably be devoted to it within the present study, I will limit myself to giving an overview of the stylistic codes that have traditionally shaped Arabic poetry. In an effort to shed light on Djebar's statements pertaining to Arabic poetry, I chose to focus on three things: firstly, the conceptual distinction between prose and poetry in classical Arabic literature; secondly, the role of audible devices in Arabic rhetoric and stylistics; thirdly, the claim made by some scholars according to which Arabic stylistic codes are related to rules of oral composition and transmission.

The formal distinction between prose and poetry seems hazier in Arabic literature than in other literatures, especially modern Western literatures. Prose and poetry do not constitute separate forms of expressions but rather two types of 'discourse' (*kalâm*) (von Grunebaum 1952: 336). Their main distinction pertains to a different intention (Moreh 1968) and the absence of meter in prose (Moreh 1968: 330, von Grunebaum 1952: 336), yet these two types of discourse are ruled by similar stylistic codes. Whatever the type of discourse, the general conception of form in Arabic rhetoric is ornamental in nature: "beauty is an ornament added at will to the treatment of a given motif. Practically all Arabic literary theory is predicated on this conviction" (von Grunebaum 1952: 326). The stylistic devices that characterize this ornate prose include homeoteleutons, alliterations, assonances, and play on words made possible by a lexicographic exploration (Moreh 1968: 330–331). Arabic poetic prose, also called Islamic rhetoric style, draws both on the Koran and the Abbasid prose and is:

> [I]ntellectual and clear, rhythmical and rhymed, highly polished, garnished with archaic expressions, rare and literary words, loaded with allusions to the rich heritage of Arabic literature and history, with proverbs, and poetry. It employed complicated techniques of alliteration, assonance, stereotype adjectives balanced with their synonyms and similes, with extensive use of nouns of pre-eminence, intensive and extensive verbs. (Moreh 1968: 334)

Such an impressive display of stylistic devices, occasionally bordering on outright saturation, points to the fact that the mastery of language and rhetoric were highly valued. This escalation in verbal performance reached its peak during the Abbasid period, characterized by an "indulgence in word-bound rather than experience-led imagery, clinging to rules and patterns, surrender to wit" (von Grunebaum 1952: 339). However, the existence of these devices is probably much older, as suggested by the poet and literary theory scholar Ibn al-Muʿtazz in his *Kitāb al-Badīʿ* (*The Book of Ornate Style*), one of the earliest works on Arabic literary theory going back to 908. Ibn al-Muʿtazz draws up a comprehensive inventory of ornamental codes ruling poetry and prose and shows how they go back to old Bedouin poets and how they have been implemented in the Koran (Bonebakker 1970: 85). The connections between the sophisticated stylistic devices ruling classical Arabic literature and the oral use of language have been pointed out by many scholars (Gonzalez-Quijano 2009, Zwettler 1976). Zwettler is amongst the scholars who, drawing on the Parry and Lord's oral-formulaic theory, suggested that the form, style, and a large part of the content of classical Arabic poetry were shaped by rules of oral composition and transmission (Zwettler 1976: 199). Zwettler's proposition, which goes beyond the scope of the present discussion, is nonetheless an invitation not only to ponder to what extent early oral Arabic literature shaped its later written forms but also to reflect on the aural potential of said written forms. Translator, Arabist, and Islamic literature scholar Herbert Mason used the example of the 1987 Marbid Poetry Festival held in Baghdad to eloquently show that the notion of oral performance and its corollaries (memorization, diction, and display of prosodic devices) are not incompatible with texts that were composed and set down in writing. Mason additionally pointed out that core expectations of the festival's audience pertained to the poets' abilities to act as linguist gymnasts and "perform gravity-defying feats of metaphor and simile, alliteration and assonance, meter and rhyme" (Mason 1988: 159). In the final chapter, I will discuss the notion of performability of written literature more extensively.

2.5 From *L'Amour* to *Algerian Cavalcade*: Turning up the volume

The editions I used are those of Albin Michel for *L'Amour, la fantasia* (1995, first published in 1985 by Jean-Claude Lattès) and Heinemann for *Fantasia, an Algerian Cavalcade* (1993, first published in 1989 by Quarter Books). A first reading of the prose poem chapters, namely "Biffure" and "Sistre", clearly shows that these sections were the focus of an intense poetic staging. More specifically, "Biffure" and "Sistre" stand out for their meticulous sonic architecture, which is not systematically true for the other prose poem chapters.[111] However, sound poetics is not confined to these chapters and manifests itself at various intensity levels throughout the autobiographical sections and historical accounts.

Given the specific narrative structure of the text, which combines historical, fictional, autobiographical accounts, and prose poems, ranging from one to twenty-six pages, I selected in each type of account the most representative chapter in terms of melopoeia: "Biffure" and "Sistre" (prose poem chapters); "Les deux inconnus" and "III" in "Deuxième partie: Les cris de la Fantasia" (autobiographical chapters); "La razzia du capitaine Bosquet, à partir d'Oran" (historical chapter); and "Corps enlacés", which is the only oral memory account that was the focus of any language sophistication and also the only one told by an extradiegetic narrator. One of my specific objectives at this stage was not only to identify and record the sound patterns implemented by Djebar but also to evaluate the density of her sound poetics according to the different types of accounts in the text before proceeding to examine Blair's translation.

Based on Djebar's own statements – further echoed by scholars and literary critics – it was clear that alliterations were at the heart of her writing project. However, further clues are discreetly embedded in the text itself:

> […] tu nous croyais bande de goum**iers**
> or nous sommes, du Prophète, les hérit**iers** ! …
> Ils parlèrent ainsi, en prose rim**ée** et ils répétèrent cette dernière affirmation qui me réveilla et me plongea dans le remords. (*L'Amour*: 248)

> 'You thought us a company of *goumiers*
> But we are indeed the Prophet's heirs! …'
> They spoke just like that, in rhymed prose, and they repeated the last bit which was what woke me up and gave me such a feeling of remorse;' (*Fantasia*: 175)

111. Out of a total of six prose poem chapters, "Murmures" is the only one that does not show any evidence of sonic sophistication. On a declining scale of sonic sophistication, "Biffure" and "Sistre" rank first, followed by "Chuchotements" and "Soliloque", then "Clameur", "Conciliabules", and "Murmures".

Although this first excerpt of the original French text contains in fact an instance of verse in the first two lines, Djebar offers an actual example of rhymed prose a few lines down:

> « [C]omme une pastèque fermée, et ses murs, un jour, ruisselleront tout entiers de vapeur et de rosée ! » Voici que moi aussi, comme les ombres du rêve, je m'exprime en prose rimée ! (248)

The sound patterns recorded in Djebar's text include, in a decreasing order of frequency, alliterations, paronomasia and chiasmus, and internal rhymes (also called homeoteleutons or rhymed prose as Djebar termed it). Whereas tongue twisters constitute only an occasional occurrence in Djebar's text, their frequency is significant in Blair's translation: for this reason, they have been recorded as a sound pattern and will be included in the discussion.

The deployment of alliterations in Djebar's text occasionally turns into a sonic frenzy as if the narration were but a thematic pretext for a symphony of a higher order as in the following excerpt from "Sistre":

> Long silence, nuits chevauchées, spirales dans la gorge. Râles, ruisseaux de sons précipices, sources d'échos entrecroisés, cataractes de murmures, chuchotements en taillis tressés, surgeons susurrant sous la langue, chuintements, et souque la voix courbe qui, dans la soute de sa mémoire, retrouve souffles souillés de soûlerie ancienne. (156)

Additional melopoetic devices add to the dominant alliterative motif: a telling example are the paronomastic suite created by *souque/soute/souffle* and its variations (*souillés/soûlerie*). The narrative theme of voiced sound, which is concentrated in this passage – from absolute silence to an impressive display of lexical nuances pointing to rattling, labored breathing, wheezing, and whispering – almost dissolves itself in a network of overlapping of sound patterns, as if one semiotic mode gave way to another while keeping the same overarching motif. Blair delivers an equally sophisticated sound construction in her translation of "Sistrum" although hers relies mainly on alliterative techniques:

> Long silence, night rides, coils curling in the throat. Rhonchial râles, streams of abyssal sounds, springs from which issue interlacing echoes, cataracts of murmurs, susurrus in braided brushwood, tendrils soughing under the tongue, hushed hisses, and the flexured voice hauls up sullied sighs of past satiety from memory's subterranean store-house. (109)

"Biffure" also offers good examples of Djebar's concern with and play with sound:

> **La prise** de **l'Imprenable** … Images éro**dées**, **dé**litées **de la** roche du Temps. Des lettres de mots français se profilent, **allongées** ou **élargies** dans leur **étrangeté**, contre les parois des cavernes, dans l'aura des flammes d'incendies successifs, tatouant les visages **disparus** de **diaprures** rougeoyantes … (69)

The sonic construction in the above excerpt does not rely on alliterations; rather it draws on a variation on close-sounding phonemes such as ***La pri**se/**L'Impre**nable*, *ero**dées**/**dé**litées*, ***dé**lit**ées**/**de la***, ***allon**gée/**éla**rgie*, ***élarg**ie/**étrang**eté*, and *disparus/diaprures*. Again, Blair's rendering is mostly focused on alliterations, with the exception of "conquest"/"Unconquerable" that echoes the morphological derivation in Djebar's text:

> The **conquest** of the Un**conque**rable … **F**aint images **f**lake o**ff** **f**rom the rock of Time. The **f**lickering **f**lames of successive **f**ires form letters of **F**rench words curiously elongated or expanded, against cave walls, tattooing vanished faces with a lurid mottling … (46)

While the passages identified in the other chapters are less dense than those found in "Sistre"/"Sistrum" and "Biffure"/"Deletion", I noticed that melopoetic passages were concentrated on specific pages where the text breaks away from semantic or narrative constraints to distinctly engage with poetic writing. A good example is found in the following excerpt from the historical account entitled "La razzia du capitaine Bosquet, à partir d'Oran", mostly structured around internal rhymes in [a], [o], and [e]:

> Quel territ**oire ?** Celui de notre mém**oire** qui **fermente ?** Quels **fantômes** se lèvent derrière l'épaule de ces offici**ers** qui, une fois leurs bottes enlev**ées** et jet**ées** dans la chambr**ée**, **c**ontinuent leur **c**orrespondance **q**uotidienne ? (76)

Samples of interesting alliterative examples include the following passage from "Corps enlacés", which lends itself to a classical Cratylian interpretation with its succession of [s]s invoking the hissing of a snake, itself metaphorically recalling the personae of the mother-in-law prowling around:

> Elle brave la belle-mère **s**oup**ç**onneuse qui rôde autour de nous, qui tente de **s**urprendre quelle né**c**e**ss**ité du ré**c**it, quel **s**ecret, quel **péché**, ou simplement quelle é**chappée** se dé**c**èle dans **c**ette hi**st**oire qui tre**ss**aille. (202)

The next example brings about a sustained alliterative chain in [s], which is further accentuated by similar-sounding syllables (*sin/sim/sing*) in the last line of the passage:

> [W]hat exige**n**c**y** in the **s**tory, what **s**ecret, what **sin**, or **sim**ply what is mis**sing** … (141)

In the sentence below, the multiplication of similar-sounding syllables (*verti/vi/verti/vi*) starting in [v] connects a sequence of words already associated at the narrative level (***divertis**sement, **vi**ril, **verti**ge,* and ***vi**ol*):[112]

> Notre capitaine s'adonne à l'illusion de ce di**verti**ssement **vi**ril : faire corps avec l'Afrique rebelle, et comment, sinon dans le **verti**ge du **vi**ol[113] et de la surprise meurtrière. (82)

When, a few pages later, officers, horsemen and crusaders "se re**paisse**nt de cette é**paisse**ur sonore" (*L'Amour*: 84–85), Djebar actualizes in her writing what she points out in the narration with officers "feasting" on the "thickness" of sound, on the clamor of voices and screams as Algiers is taken over. Comparable paronomastic techniques are frequently found in Djebar's text: *corps/coule/courbe* (153), *la mort/l'amour* (153), *soufflerie/souffreteuse/soufrière* (157), *révolte/entravée/révélateur* (165), *un ami, tel un amant, m'exhuma* (165), *compagnes/complices* (202). Reading the text aloud lays bare additional connections, provided that the reader engages with the full spectrum of potentials offered by sound: "le timbre de sa v**oi**x, au creux de cette houle, résonne encore **en moi**. **Émoi** définitivement présent" (162). The quasi-perfect sonic overlapping of *en moi* ('in me') and *émoi* ('commotion') additionally elicits, consciously or unconsciously, *et moi* ('and me'). Once again, the sonic allows the text to convey more than it does at first sight.

As suggested earlier, Blair organized her own writing project mostly around alliterative techniques as evidenced in the tables presented later. She did not shy away from saturating her text with overpowering alliterations:

> This sturdy, thick-set septuagenarian stands up in his gold stirrups, his white beard streaming before him, bursting with eagerness to do battle that belies his years. (52)

Tongue twisters occasionally occur as a natural consequence of this alliterative frenzy. This is the case in the above excerpt and the passages below which not only draw attention to the materiality of the text, but also echo the multiple cacophonies of battles, cavalcade, pillage, and rape narrated by Djebar in the historical accounts:

> At first this resi**due**, these **dregs**, this **c**oal-sla**ck cakes** and **clogs** my palate, then the mixture of impurities is **f**lushed **f**rom my mou**th** in a harsh deep-**th**roated cry which seems to go before me. (115)
>
> And I must tell also of my victory, i**ts** ta**s**te of lo**st s**weetne**ss** as the wave **s**wept over me. (107)

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112. Divertissement translates as 'entertainment' and viol as 'rape'.

113. A similar connection is found elsewhere in the text, with "vertige du violeur" (*L'Amour*: 67).

Blair's singular focus on the sonic reenactment of the text is reflected in some of her translation choices that forego the classic notion of semantic fidelity to sustain sound patternings: the fabric in Djebar's "ensemble pied-de-poule bleu ciel" (*L'Amour*: 145) turns into silk to sustain the alliterative chain in Blair's "silk suit in sky-blue checks" (*Fantasia*: 101).

The systematic recording presented in Tables 16, 17, and 18 offers detailed insight into Blair's translation practice.

Table 16. Recording of sound patterns in selected chapters from Djebar's *L'Amour, la fantasia*

	(1)*	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	**Aggregate data**
Alliterations and assonances	5	4	9	14	8	5	**45**
Internal rhymes	1	1	10	8	5	0	**25**
Paronomasia and phonic chiasmus	2	4	6	4	4	1	**21**
Tongue twisters	0	3	0	1	0	1	**5**

* (1) corresponds to "Biffure"; (2) to "Sistre"; (3) to "Les deux inconnus"; (4) to "III"; (5) to "La razzia du Capitaine Bosquet à partir d'Oran"; (6) to "Corps enlacés".

Table 17. Recording of sound patterns in selected chapters from *Fantasia, an Algerian Cavalcade* (trans. by Blair)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	**Aggregate data**
Alliterations and assonances	6	7	15	14	25	11	**78**
Internal rhymes	1	0	1	5	3	2	**12**
Paronomasia and phonic chiasmus	3	3	3	3	4	3	**19**
Tongue twisters	1	4	2	1	4	1	**13**

Table 18. Re-creation of sound patterns by Blair

Alliterations and assonances	173%
Internal rhymes	48%
Paronomasia and phonic chiasmus	90%
Tongue twisters	260%

The above data confirm Blair's allegiance to the poetic fabric of the text as was previously evidenced by her scholarly publications in general and her introduction to the translation in particular. In order to give a first-level interpretation of these statistics, I suggest to briefly return to Garane's and Richard's translation and focus

on alliterations for a moment. While alliterations clearly represent Djebar's core motif in *L'amour*, the motif becomes overexposed, as it were, in Blair's translation. As I pointed out in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, Garane and Richard equally embraced the alliterative motif in their translation and slightly outpaced their respective authors' own practice.[114] Their re-creations, however, do not bear any comparison with Blair's intensification since the density of alliterations is almost twice as high in her translation compared with Djebar's text. Another unusual characteristic of Blair's translation pertains to her ability to reenact Djebar's paronomasia, which represents a particularly complex category of sound patterns. With a 90% paronomasia re-creation rate, Blair stands out from her peers.[115]

While sound intensification is noticeably concentrated in Djebar's "Biffure" and "Sistre", Blair does not limit herself to these chapters. Rather, her preoccupation with sound pervades all the chapters in *Fantasia* to the strict exception of those unedited oral testimonies by rural women that are devoid of any stylistic efforts in *L'Amour*, and which Blair made no attempt to "polish", recognizing their "sobriety of tone", "laconic expression and popular turns of phrases" (*Fantasia*: "Introduction", no page number). More importantly perhaps, the language sobriety of these chapters is, Blair claims, an "important element in the antiphonal structure of the work" (*ibid.*). In other chapters, however, Blair's alliterative practice becomes particularly pervasive: in "Captain Bosquet […]", for instance, alliterations are multiplied by three.

3. Overexposures

The two translations discussed in this chapter exhibit the common characteristic of foregrounding one specific type of sound pattern. By nearly tripling internal rhymes in *L'Age d'or*, Josette and Robert Mane constructed their own motif based on a pattern that, albeit existent in *The Beautyful Ones*, cannot qualify as sound motif in Armah's text. What Blair did is of a different nature inasmuch as she worked from Djebar's well-identified alliterative motif to give it an overexposed quality. J. and R. Mane recreated about half of the two core motifs in Armah's text, alliterations and paronomasia, while introducing internal rhymes as their own type of sonic expression. Blair's attitude toward Djebar's motifs include the overexposure of an existing alliterative motif, and the quasi-total re-creation of paronomasia – a tour de force that makes her stand out among her peers.

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114. A 122% re-creation rate for Garane and 110% for Richard.

115. Richard recreated 57% of Hove's paronomasia, which already represented a much higher re-creation rate compared with the other translations discussed in this book.

To put these observations into perspective, let us return to the respective contexts of production and reception of these four texts. Unarguably, both translations reflect the translators' concern with the aesthetics of their respective original text. J. and R. Mane worked on Armah's text without benefiting from any critical framework discussing its specific poetic qualities as the polemic surrounding the reception of *The Beautyful Ones* overshadowed any and all discussion regarding its aesthetic fabric. As such, their reenactment of Armah's sound poetics represents an achievement along the line of that of Katiyo's when she translated Adiaffi. *L'Age d'or* was published in 1976, a time during which African literary criticism was marked by a disregard for the specific literary qualities of the texts and oriented the reading of the latter toward their extra-literary qualities, focusing exclusively on cultural explanations as well as historical and political changes at the expense of literary choices (Harrow 2009: 423). What is more, *The Beautyful Ones* undisputedly conveys a strong political message cast in a formidable metaphor, a combination that was amplified up to becoming the single reading of the text. The Manes, however, amidst all the turmoil surrounding the reception of the book, clearly focused on the poetic fabric of the text, which alone can be interpreted as a remarkable performance, even if their translation choices reveal an idiosyncratic sound motif. A close analysis of their translation project, however, recalls Folkart's statement pertaining to the mediation operated by translators as receiving subjects who apply to the text a set of presuppositions, including aesthetic ones, and only recognize what they have learned to recognize (Folkart 1991: 310). Drawing on Folkart's claim, the Manes's over-implementation of internal rhymes, for instance, can be interpreted as the expression of a poetic preference based on what they, as receiving subjects, have learned to recognize and appreciate.

Blair found herself in the exact opposite situation. It would have been difficult for Blair to ignore Djebar's alliterative motif and, more globally, Djebar's sound poetics in her translation project since this trait was abundantly documented by literary critics, including Djebar herself who turned it into a reading grid – a self-positioning not too dissimilar to Waberi's. This context, combined with Blair's own profile as a translator intent on attending to the poetic texture of the texts she was entrusted with during her career as a literary translator and whose concern with sound reminds of Barbara Wright, suffice to explain the overexpression of alliterations in Blair's translation.

CHAPTER 5

Modalities and intermedialities

1. Of interpretation

In this first section, I will attempt to propose criteria for interpreting the results from the case studies presented in Chapters 2, 3, and 4. Before doing so, let us briefly return to the epistemological framework of this book.

The analyses showed that the texts discussed here are characterized by sound poetics that draws, to varying degrees, on the authors' literary heritage and aesthetic codes. Further connections to other writers, literary practices and movements were established, wherever relevant. As a second step, I examined a range of translatorial attitudes toward this sound poetics and considered various contextual factors that may have contributed to shaping said attitudes.

In order to better interpret the variables that may influence the re-creation of sound poetics, I would like to briefly recall some of the data that were collected as a basis for discussion. The following summary tables show the percentage of re-creation of sound patterns by Jacqueline Bardolph, Jeanne Garane, Brigitte Katiyo, Jean-Pierre Richard, Josette and Robert Mane, and Dorothy Blair, respectively.

Table 19. Re-creation of sound patterns by Bardolph

Alliterations and assonances	32%
Paronomasia and phonic chiasmus	15%
Internal rhymes	30%
Tongue twisters	31%
Repetitions	23%
Puns	20%

Table 20. Re-creation of sound patterns by Garane

Alliterations and assonances	122%
Paronomasia and phonic chiasmus	55%
Internal rhymes	38%
Tongue twisters	83%
Repetitions and morphological derivations	40%
Puns	75%

Table 21. Re-creation of sound patterns by Katiyo

Paronomasia and phonic chiasmus	29%
Alliterations and assonances	61%
Lexical repetitions	80%
Syntactic parallelism	75%
Internal rhymes	11%
Morphological derivations	60%
Tongue twisters	100%

Table 22. Re-creation of sound patterns by Richard

Lexical repetitions	78%
Alliterations	110%
Assonances	113%
Paronomasia and phonic chiasmus	57%
Internal rhymes	71%
Syntactic parallelism	107%
Morphological derivations	89%
Linking	80%

Table 23. Re-creation of sound patterns by J. and R. Mane

Alliterations	58%
Paronomasia and phonic chiasmus	53%
Internal rhymes	233%
Lexical repetitions	60%
Morphological derivations	0%

Table 24. Re-creation of sound patterns by Blair

Alliterations and assonances	173%
Internal rhymes	48%
Paronomasia and phonic chiasmus	90%
Tongue twisters	260%

2. Weighting factors

Arguably, interpreting these translation projects focusing solely on the *existence* of sound motifs in the texts would have been simplistic. Rather, I propose to consider the contexts relating to each text and its translation as weighting factors shaping the translators' decision to recreate sound motifs. The first of these weighting factors concerns the level of recognition of the writer's literary heritage. The second factor pertains to the critics' polarizing labeling of the original text as either "political" or "poetic" and – if the text's poetics is mentioned at all – the connection with said literary heritage. The third factor involves the translators' own profile, including their publications, previous translations, and paratextual material.

Farah's and Waberi's case studies offer the most interesting ground for illustrating these weighting factors since both writers draw on a common literary heritage. Somali oral literature and its sophisticated poetic codes have been and continue to be the subject of scholarly attention (Factor 1). However, I showed that critics and publishers tend to systematically qualify Waberi's works as poetic, which is not the case with Farah's, although both writers have insisted that their writing is substantially informed by the poetic codes of Somali oral literature (Factor 2). As David Porter claimed in his 2011 article titled "Crisis of Comparison and the Word Literature Debate": "Taxonomic labels, crucial to ordering and differentiation, enforce stasis and conformity as a condition for articulating a regulated system of distinctions" (2011: 252). Genre constitutes a critical condition of the object's legibility "yet the centripetal pull of Eurocentric categories appears, for the moment, inescapable" (*ibid.*). The fact that Waberi published *poems*, then short stories, before moving on to novels undisputedly contributed to reinforce said taxonomic labels. To illustrate the third factor (i.e., the translator's profile) beyond the examination of articles, previous translations, and paratextual material, I interviewed Jeanne Garane, Waberi's translator (2010). The information she shared with me not only confirms what transpires from her publications, but also shed light on her personal motivations for embracing sound motifs in Waberi's text. Beyond her frequent contacts with the Somali community, Garane benefited from precious insights from her brother-in-law, a "very traditional" (Garane 2010) and exceptional erudite from southern Somalia who shared with her his knowledge of Somali literature and culture. Without his insights, Garane claims, translating *Le Pays sans ombre* would have been simply impossible. As a translator of literatures that have been misrepresented for such a long time, the responsibility and duty to do it right are enormous, claims Garane (2010). Re-creating the poetics of Waberi's text was undisputedly part of her responsibility, especially as Waberi had personally insisted on this specific aspect of his text (*ibid.*). Garane stated that generic labeling

did not really weigh on her approach to the text. Above all, she felt accountable for the author's scriptural project: since the text was poetic, it was her responsibility to recreate this dimension, not least because African literatures have suffered from decades of biased representation:

> I remember my brother-in-law telling me "if you want to work on African Literature, that is a big responsibility". I will never forget that. It resonates all the time. I think that as with anything I do in [the field of African Literature] I am very careful. […]. There is the issue of being a Westerner, an American dealing not only with translation but also with scholarship. **I feel like you really need to do your homework**. You just can't just go in and do something. […] Especially with Africa because it has been so misrepresented. (Garane 2010. Emphasis mine)

Clearly, what is at stake here goes beyond such dichotomies as "foreignizing/domesticating" and can hardly be debated within the reductive framework they construct. Garane indicated that she would not have approached the text differently if it had been one of Waberi's "poems": she worked meticulously, immersing herself in the text and paying particular attention to its poetic fabric more intuitively than analytically, using her ear as a guide.[116] Interestingly, Garane started to engage with theoretical questions posed by translation after completing the translation of Waberi's book (*ibid*.). An important consideration, which I briefly hinted at in Chapter 2, pertains to the titanic task that such a translation project represents. Conditions established by publishing houses, namely deadlines, unquestionably contribute to shaping translation projects; Garane enjoyed the privilege to work with a university press[117] for whom rapidity of execution was not a determining criterion (Garane 2010).

Garane's experience and testimony invites me to return to the three weighting factors and propose a few comments. While genre labeling (Factor 2) seems not to have influenced Garane, her particular profile and, more specifically, personal experience and relationship with the Somali community (Factor 3) strongly shaped her reading of Waberi's text beyond Western taxonomies. Additionally, her knowledge of Somali oral literature was primarily acquired through personal acquaintance rather than from existing scholarship (Factor 1). These few comments point to the interaction of said three weighting factors, which I suggest as variables rather than

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116. Interestingly, Garane, who shared her interest in the concept of "musical" translation, started learning a musical instrument after she completed her translation. One remembers Queneau's British translator, Barbara Wright, whose training as a professional pianist led her to translate the works of Queneau, Pinget, and those of other writers for whom, according to Wright, a musical ear is a prerequisite.

117. University of Virginia Press. CARAF Books Series.

rigid criteria. Actually, it is useful to envision these factors as interacting variables within an ecosystem.

In an ideal world, an interview with Jacqueline Bardolph would have provided precious insights into her translation of Farah's *Secrets* and allowed me to go beyond speculations regarding her approach to translating Farah's alliterative motif. By far, Bardolph represents the translator who was the least sensitive to her writer's sound motif, whereas Farah is the writer who spelled out the most explicitly his indebtedness toward Somali oral literature. Farah articulated his literary heritage not only as drawing on specific poetic codes ruling Somali literature, but also as relating to his mother, an oral poet to whom he dedicated the entirety of his works. However, except for Cingal, who meticulously documented this double connection operating on a collective-self and personal level, Farah's scriptural project and its ramifications have rarely been given substantial attention.[118]

To contrast Bardolph's translation and its context of production, let us consider for a moment J. and R. Mane's translation (1976) of Armah's *The Beautyful Ones are Not Yet Born*. In the 1970s, interest for scholarship on African literature in non-Europhone languages, including Akan oral literature, was incipient (Factor 1); critics all but pointed to the poetic qualities of Armah's text when it was published, and Armah did not share any insight on his own writing inspirations or related to his Akan heritage at that specific time[119] (Factor 2). Despite this a priori unfavorable context, *L'Age d'or n'est pas pour demain* shows evidence of the translators' concern for re-creating a poetic object. However, the translators engaged in a sonic landscape that mobilized different types of sound patterns, notably foregrounding internal rhymes, which may have been more familiar to them. Considering the translators' additional interventions in the text, such as the erasing of lexical and syntactic repetitions and the elimination of sociolect and pidgins, one may interpret their series of micro-decisions in a different way. In this new light, and although their translation appears as a poetic object, it is tempting to interpret the translators' interventions as manipulations to conform to French norms, and more specifically the "génie de la langue française", which is so readily invoked (Derive 1997, Déprats 2002, Richard 2005b). It is true that the non-translation of the few passages written in Ghanaian pidgin or those mimicking accents pointing to uneducated social categories levels out the text's dialogues: in these specific passages, readers of the French translation cannot identify the sociocultural background of the characters.

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118. Moolla's 2012 article is dedicated to Somali oral poetry and its connection to Farah's novels but does not focus on Farah's alliterative writing as such.

119. As years went by, Armah increasingly and vehemently affirmed his indebtedness to African and Akan oral literary forms as a self-conscious break from European forms. *The Beautyful Ones* predates this period of conspicuous affirmation of identity.

As a result, part of the power dynamics eludes the readers of the translation. In fact, the Manes translated sociolects in one single instance, i.e. in a parodic passage staging "one young man" (83) imitating an obsequious Ghanaian leader facing a (generic) white governor, with the effect of causing general amusement among the young man's colleagues. The young man uses Broken English, which conveys an infantilizing and denigrating image of the local language. In the translation, these passages are recreated with the classic "*parler petit nègre*", omitting the [r]s and using words such as "*missié*", making the lines sound directly imported from *Tintin au Congo*. The Manes's decision to translate only this specific occurrence of sociolect as part of a parodic passage is anything but anodyne. While the function and symbolic value of translating sociolects are at present recognized in postcolonial translation studies, scholars do not agree as to *how* to translate them. Bandia claims that varieties of West African Pidgin English (WAPE) represent a translation challenge because they have the status of a Creole language with no sociolinguistic equivalent in French-speaking Africa (Bandia 2008). In other words, any attempt at translating them into French is susceptible to convey problematic connotations. It is possible that the Manes decided to translate this specific instance of sociolects only because of its obvious satirical value and chose to ignore other instances because of said problematic connotations.

These two interpretations of *L'Age d'or* are not mutually excluding: on one hand, the Manes's translation can be interpreted as re-creating a poetic object and avoiding problematic connotations; on the other hand, it can be interpreted as smoothing out the saliences and personality of the text for a French readership. Additionally, their translation allows us to reflect on the diachronic evolution of the critical discourse on the translation of African literature, and, more specifically, on the value assigned to specific textual characteristics. It also underscores the agency of the critic who, by choosing to focus on specific translation choices to the detriment of others, can offer a very different analysis. Let us return to the three factors or variables suggested above. If we choose to interpret *L'Age d'or* as the re-creation of a finely crafted poetic object that was elaborated against the flow of critical reviews of *The Beautyful Ones*, should we conclude that a translation project is more dependent on the translator's background and filters than on the reception of the original text? In other words, should Factor/Variable 3 be given more weight than the first two ones? This does by no means imply that translators choose to ignore the context and work solely from the "bare" text. Garane insisted on having carefully researched the culture and literary tradition informing Waberi's text before engaging with the translation. What is more probable is that the selection of textual valencies, notably the decision to focus on a text's sound poetics, grows out of the translator's background, filters, and sensitivities. As such, the Manes's translation illustrates the limits of the interpretation of any given translation project: Folkart's

remark regarding translating subjects who apprehend the object to be translated with a series of filters, prejudices, and preconceptions, and only recognize what they have learned to recognize (1991: 310) is also true for subjects interpreting translation projects. In other words, while I contend that the variables established above are helpful for apprehending the (non)re-creation of sound motifs in the translation projects examined in this study, the complexity and limitations associated with interpreting the translators' motivation and approach to these texts should also be clearly stated.

Returning to Blair's translation will allow me to further explore this reflection. Clearly, Blair is the translator who showed the strongest commitment to reinforcing a valency from Djebar's text, namely its alliterative motif. The overabundance of alliterations in her translation can be construed in two ways, which are best envisioned as complementary rather than mutually excluding. I showed Blair's strong interest for oral literatures in Africa and their poetic structures, namely melopoetic structures. Additionally, I pointed out that *L'Amour, la fantasia* had been systematically presented – by critics as well as Djebar herself – as an alliterative text drawing both on classical Arabic poetry and Djebar's native language, which had the status of an oral language for her.[120] The cumulation of the two circumstances created more than favorable conditions and may explain Blair's overemphasis on alliterations. "[B]y allowing specific attributes of the source text to dominate, and hence, to represent the entirety of the work" (Tymoczko 1999: 282), Blair's translation is a perfect illustration of Tymoczko's metonymic vision of translation: Blair's foregrounding of alliterations points to a full set of aesthetic, social, and emotional references that laid the framework for *L'Amour*.

Richard's translation is another case in point. Richard approached Hove's text in a highly rigorous way and documented his quasi-mathematical method by including a numeric recording of all lexical repetitions in *Ancestors* (Richard 2005b: 115) to recreate Hove's motif of repetition, including in its sonic dimension, in his 2005 article titled "1 + 1 = 3 : traduire la figure de répétition dans la première séquence de *Ancestors*, roman de Chenjerai Hove" '1 + 1 = 3: translating the device of repetition in the first sequence of *Ancestors*, a novel by Chenjerai Hove' (2005b). In a subsequent article focusing on the poetics of rhythm in Meschonnic's essays, Richard (2010) adopted the same analytical approach and systematically recorded Meschonnic's use of lexical repetitions and stylistic devices (such as rhymes and paronomasia) to show how the organization of signifiers in Meschonnic's essays were articulated with Meschonnic's own theory of rhythm. Richard is the translator who reconstructed the most meticulously his author's sonic project: except

120. See Chapter 4, part 2, for a reminder of what "oral" entailed for Djebar.

for paronomasia, Richard recreated each of Hove's sound patterns at a rate ranging from about 70% to 110%, espousing the contours of Hove's motif, as it were. While Richard and Blair shared substantial expertise in the translation of African literatures, which is not the case for the other translators examined in this study, Richard is the only translator who doubled as a professor of literary translation,[121] which certainly accounts for his theoretical framework and analytical approach. It is also useful to mention that Richard also translates for the stage, notably plays by Shakespeare,[122] and considers all translations to be in themselves dramatic. Based on Richard's published interview with Tervonen (2003) and my own interview with Garane (2010), we can observe that the re-creation of sound aesthetics in translation may proceed from either an intuitive approach (Garane[123]) or an analytical one (Richard).

In an attempt at better conceptualizing sound motifs for translation purposes in a rapidly changing editorial landscape, I turned to an additional theoretical framework, which is the object of the next section.

3. Intermedial translation as a paradigm

The six original texts examined in this study have been examined as poetic objects with an emphasis on melopoeia. While melopoeia is far from being an exclusive characteristic of these texts, I showed the particular workings of each motif in the respective texts, and their value as a reminiscence of literatures structured to be listened to.

At this stage in the discussion, it is useful to return to the vexed yet unavoidable question of "origin", in other words, to the source of inspiration of these sound poetics. What is the relevance of "telling" whether a particular author received more inspiration from his native or intimate literary heritage rather than from Joyce, Baudelaire, or the surrealist movement, for instance? I suggest conceiving sound poetics as the common denominator of these different literatures rather than as a symptom of alterity. My proposition does not imply underestimating the personal and historical value of the writers' respective literary heritage. What

121. While five out of seven translators were or are also academics, Richard is the only one who taught translation. He was the director of the graduate program in professional literary translation (DESS) at Université Paris 7 and has been a literary translator since 1982 (Tervonen 2003).

122. Other playwrights in his translator's repertoire include Woody Allen, Suzan-Lori Parks, and Bill Morrison.

123. This is also Marjolijn de Jager's approach to translating Djebar (personal interview conducted on October 12, 2012).

is at stake here is to acknowledge the existence of sound aesthetics, their core motivation, and multiple potential inspirations. In the six case studies, I demonstrated how narratives are shaped by the sonic: whether augmented or modified; with sound creating or reinforcing associations, paradoxes, and contradictions. I showed that the sonic represents a formidable rhetorical apparatus that can hardly be dissociated from oral rhetoric. In short, these texts are composed to be heard and beg to be read aloud.

In her article titled "What's in a turn? On fits, starts and writhings in recent translation studies", which offers a reflection on translating for the stage, Snell-Hornby (2009) defines four categories of translation based on the type of medium or mode involved. The category coined "audio-medial translation" (2009: 14) applies to texts composed to be read aloud and seems a priori relevant for the texts examined in this book. It is, however, necessary to mention that Snell-Hornby illustrates audio-medial texts with political speeches, which are rather governed by functionalist principles rather than literary considerations. Snell-Hornby's categories draw on Reiss's propositions, including her initial category of audio-medial texts:

> Katharina Reiss identified texts of this kind in 1971 as "audio-medial" texts, meaning songs, film scripts, opera libretti and stage plays, and later, following a suggestion by Bernd Spillner (1980), changed the term to "multi-medial" to include texts like comics and advertising material. (Snell-Hornby 2009: 44)

"Multimodal translation" is another of the four categories suggested by Snell-Hornby and involves "different modes of verbal and non-verbal expression, comprising both sight and sound, as in drama and opera" (*ibid*.). Conceiving the translation of sound motifs using one of these two categories permits to envision the text beyond the confines of an object merely designed to be read silently. As such, Snell-Hornby's propositions constituted a first step in the right direction and helped me turn to intermediality studies for additional concepts.

What I needed was a conceptual framework capable of encompassing not only the particular workings of these texts calling upon readers' listening capacities, but also their context of production (reminiscent of an oral literary heritage), and their potential transformation in today's digital publishing landscape. The theoretical propositions of Ong and McLuhan, which I alluded to in Chapter 1, do not permit such conceptual plasticity. On the contrary, Ong and McLuhan emphasized the gap between oral production and written production, between "literate" societies (read: relying on books) and oral ones and contributed to freezing these categories. With its focus on interaction and commutation between media and modalities, intermediality scholarship provided a fitting framework for my reflection.

Mariniello envisions intermediality it its broadest sense, as a form of recycling, which reminds of Armah's *n'zassa* in many ways:

> On entend l'intermédialité comme hétérogénéité; comme conjonction de plusieurs systèmes de communication et de représentation; comme recyclage dans une pratique médiatique, le cinéma par exemple, d'autres pratiques médiatiques, la bande dessinée, l'Opéra comique, etc.; **comme convergence de plusieurs médias; comme interaction entre médias**; comme emprunt; comme interaction de différents supports; comme intégration d'une pratique avec d'autres; comme adaptation; comme assimilation progressive de procédés variés; **comme flux d'expériences sensorielles et esthétiques plutôt qu'interaction entre textes clos**; comme faisceau de liens entre médias […]. 'Intermediality is to be understood as heterogeneity; as conjunction between different systems of communication and representation; as recycling of other media practices such as *bande dessinée* and comic opera in another media practice such as cinema for instance; **as convergence of multiple media; as interaction between media**; as borrowing; as interaction between different materials; as integration of different practices; as adaptation; as progressive assimilation of various processes; **as streams of sensory and aesthetic experiences rather than interaction between closed texts**; as converging lines between media.'
>
> (Mariniello 1999. Emphasis mine)

Rajewsky's definition of intermediality focuses on the transposition from one medium to the other (2005: 51) and encompasses the commutation from one modality to another. Seen through this particular conceptual lens, sound motifs can be envisioned as an element common to different modes of *consumption* of literature such as oral literature, written literature, and audiobooks. An intermedial approach permits to transcend the unhelpful hierarchies of senses traditionally assigned to specific media. Conventionally, sound ranks either at the very top or the very bottom of said hierarchies depending on the specific medium at hand. In written literature for instance, visual and intellectual dimensions are considered prominent features as opposed to the sonic dimension, which ranks at the very bottom. An intermedial approach is an invitation to transcend these traditional hierarchies: more specifically, it allows us to consider sound motifs in written literature as a transversal component, as a reminiscence of a different hierarchy and helps us better apprehend the writers' oral literary heritage as a palimpsest that structures their texts.

Rajewsky suggests intermediality as a tool for literary analysis; to that end, she distinguishes three intermedial subcategories as follows: the first one pertains to the transposition from one media product to another (medial transposition), the second one to the combination of different media (media combination), and the third one to intermedial references, which "thematizes, evokes, or imitates elements or structures of another, conventionally distinct medium through the use of its own media-specific means" (Rajewsky 2005: 53). This third subcategory is arguably the most fitting to conceptualize sound motifs as transversal component that does not disappear on the written page. Among the three media mentioned above: oral literary performance, written book, and audiobook, the written book is

the only medium that does not call upon the sense of hearing in its strictly physical acceptation. Mentioning the physical acceptation is anything but trivial: Frye (1957) contended that sound structures remain perfectly perceptible during silent reading and Christopher Middleton claimed that the inner ear, which is mobilized during silent reading, in fact offers more sophistication than audible vocalizing:

> [T]he inner ear is capable of an auditory complexity, which exceeds almost any audible vocalizing: the latter tends to be reductive, if not falsifying, also it may straighten out shocks and distortions, which, to the inner ear, are part of the real thing that is the voice in the text and the delight of the text. (Middleton 1998: 92)

Examining the transformations of literature and commutations between the three media under discussion is helpful at this stage of the discussion.

4. Listening to literature throughout history

Apprehending modern digital literary practices, namely audiobooks, requires us to go back in time since reading aloud practices have a long and rich history:

> L'histoire des pratiques culturelles et de la lecture en particulier aide à prendre conscience de la complexité que présentent les actes de lecture. Et la lecture à haute voix qui fut, jusqu'au milieu du XIX^{e} siècle, un procédé de lecture fort répandu dans toute l'Europe, se réduisit peu à peu aux usages religieux et scolaires. 'The history of cultural practices and reading in particular helps us realize the complexity attached to acts of reading. And reading aloud, which, up until the middle of the 19th century, was a very common mode of reading throughout Europe, was gradually reduced to religious and scholarly uses.' (Jean 1999: 14)

The reading aloud of newspapers and classic literature was an essential part of the workplace in 19th century manufactures in England and France (Cavallo and Chartier 1999: 341). This practice was also an integral element of the daily life of Cuban cigar makers (Manguel 2001: 154–155) and workers delighted in listening to literary masterpieces such as Dumas' *Le Comte de Monte Cristo* whose popularity is reflected in the eponymous Cuban cigar brand. At the end of the 19th century, the reading aloud tradition followed the Cuban migrant cigar makers to Florida where the institution of the *lector* found a new life (Manguel 2001: 157).

Reading aloud was not reserved to uneducated milieus: educated circles enjoyed it either for entertainment or instruction purposes. For women in 19th-century England, it represented the only socially accepted mode of education (Manguel 2001: 168). An important feature of being read to is the notion that the audience was doing a manual task at the same time. In that regard, and, although being read to was mostly a collective experience at that time, the existence of a parallel task,

manual or not, to the act of listening is also true of audiobooks. As intermediality scholars Stougaard Pedersen and Have aptly remark, audiobooks reinstall "in the reading experience an oral mode that has been thrust into the background for a long time" during which silent reading was conventionally naturalized (2012: 83).

5. Audiobooks: From rebirth to explosion

Audiobooks are not a new phenomenon: they emerged in the 1930s in Britain and the United States to serve the needs of the blind community, namely soldiers returning from WWI with eye injuries (Rubery 2011: 5). Since then, audiobooks have long transcended their initial compensatory purpose[124] and their status as a rapidly growing practice merits our full attention. In fact, the phenomenon has reached such popularity, outdistancing other digital book formats such as e-books, that talking about a veritable explosion is not overstated. According to the Association of American Publishers, audiobooks grew about 20% in 2017; by comparison, print books grew by 1.5% and e-books dropped by 5.4% in the same period (Rowe 2018). Trends vary from one country to the other, and, while audiobooks are popular in Germany and Scandinavia for instance, French readers are slower to show enthusiasm.[125]

It is critical to frame the everyday use of audiobooks within an increasingly digital and mobile mode audio culture (Stougaard Pedersen and Have 2012). Among young readers, audiobooks are but an extension of written books, and Burkey points to the complementarity of the different modes of reading available today:

> Today's reader turns to a variety of media to experience stories, toggling between audiobooks in the car, an e-book on the iPad, and a paperback book at home, while the story remains the same – and challenges our long-standing definition of the term reading. […] The ability to shift seamlessly from image to text to sound will be part of every young person's transliterate education. (Burkey 2013: 37 and 77)

Many criticizers of audiobooks point to a form of distracted listening[126] as the focus on the text competes with parallel activities and background sounds. As I

124. Audiobooks were originally designed for the blind community, then for children and adults with learning disabilities or visual handicaps (see Stougaard Pedersen and Have 2012 for a full discussion on this topic).

125. Only 1% of books sold in France are audiobooks, compared with 5% in Germany, and 10% in the United States (Nougué 2017). Recent statistics, however, show that the French audiobook market is indeed progressing (Payot 2018).

126. For a comprehensive discussion on the topic of involvement (or lack of thereof) and uncritical reading, see Stougaard Pedersen and Have 2012.

pointed out earlier, this characteristic was also true for the reading aloud practices described above. Today, the level of distraction is however individual since listening to audiobooks occurs mostly in a situated and specific contextual setting involving the moving body (Stougaard Pedersen and Have 2012: 83).

An important feature of listening to literature pertains to the performance of professional narrator whose aural staging shapes the listening experience and the reception of the text (Gervais and Gendron 2010). In terms of visibility, the addition of a professional narrator who sometimes doubles as a renowned actor or the author him- or herself is detrimental to translators whose name completely disappears from the cover.[127] Audiolib CEO Lévy-Soussan claims that the mediation of a professional narrator allows the audience to perceive elements that would otherwise have gone unnoticed, such as specific effects or rhythms that authors introduce in a sentence (in Malaure 2009). Lévy-Soussan's claim is supported by many, including French Comédie-Française actor Podalydès, an early consumer of audiobooks: "Le livre audio donne au texte sa vérité. Il déplie toutes ses images, libère sa musique" 'audiobooks restore the text's truth. It unfolds all its images, liberates its music' (Payot 2018).

In the fall of 2015, I taught an undergraduate seminar that introduced students to French and Francophone literary texts, some of them in both print and audio formats to respond the full spectrum of literacy among the students in the class.[128] Dany Laferrière's *L'Énigme du retour* was one of the last texts introduced yet a number of students struggled to perceive poetic patterns in the print excerpt. After listening to the same excerpt in its audiobook version read by Laferrière himself, all of them were able to identify poetic sound patterns. It is important to understand that this mediated reading allows the audience to create "intimate and aestheticized spaces" (Bull 2005) and weighs on the production of meaning for the perceiving subject. Arguably, the mediation of a physical voice reading the text aloud implies that a series of choices are made for the audience, such as accentuation, tempo, phrasing, and type of voice before the input reaches the ears of the listener, which entails a potential hermeneutic closure (Stougaard Pedersen and Have 2012: 87). This observation is in line with Middleton's claim that the inner ear is capable of more sophistication than audible vocalizing (1998).

127. At least in the selection of audiobooks examined for the purpose of this study.

128. Excerpts from Camus's *L'étranger* were first introduced in a print format, then in their audio version read by Camus himself (INA archive: http://www.ina.fr/audio/PHD89021173).

6. African literatures and audiobooks: An unavoidable combination?

As part of the reading nights series organized by the Paris-based association Texte & Voix, excerpts from Hove's trilogy translated by Richard (*Ossuaire*, *Ombres*, and *Ancêtres*) were read by two Comédie-Française comedians at the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier in Paris in September 2002.[129] According to Richard, this reading aloud experience was akin to a theater performance: "tellement l'oralité de cette écriture est forte" 'because of the sheer aural dimension of his writing' (2011).

I conducted a brief survey to know whether the works of the authors examined in my study – Farah, Waberi, Djebar, Hove, Armah, and Adiaffi – are available in audiobook format. To the best of my knowledge,[130] none of Waberi's or Adiaffi's texts is available in that format in any language. Armah's *Beautyful Ones* and Hove's *Bones* and *Shadows* are available in Swedish. Djebar's texts are largely available in audiobook format: ten in French, four in Swedish, one in Danish, and one in Croatian; *L'Amour, la fantasia* is available in both French and Swedish. Seven of Farah's novels are available in audiobook format in English, four in Swedish, one in Danish, and one in German. *Secrets* exists in audiobook only in Swedish and German.

As part of the overall growth of the audiobook market in the United States, an increasing number of works by African writers are available as audiobooks in English, ranging from classics (Achebe, Soyinka, Okri, Ngugi) to contemporary authors (Adichie,[131] Gurnah, Mda, and Farah, to name just a few). While earlier works were solely intended for the Blind and Vision Impaired, this is not the case anymore – a trend that concerns all recorded books, as mentioned above. French-language African fiction is still lagging behind, and Mabanckou can be considered as a pioneer in that area. *Black Bazar*, read by actor Paul Borne, was the first of Mabanckou's books to be offered as an audiobook (2009), followed by *Demain j'aurai vingt ans* read by Mabanckou himself (2010). *Petit piment* and *Mémoires de porc-épic* read by Mabanckoou came out in 2016.

Germany-based *Africa erzählt* ('Africa told') is an audiobook series focusing on African novelists. The series is part of a collaboration between Scala-Z-Media and Steinbach Sprachende Bücher – a German publishing house specialized in audiobooks since the 1980s. They published Farah's *Geheimnisse* (German translation of *Secrets*) in 2007, and all the audiobooks in the series are translations, mostly

129. Personal communication with Richard (April 21, 2011).

130. I used the databases of Worldcat, the BnF, and the Library of Congress (September 26, 2018).

131. All the fiction books by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie are available as audiobooks in their original English version.

from English or French and occasionally from Swahili. By offering these texts in audio format, Scala-Z-Media intends to recognize them as part of a continuum that originated from oral literary traditions:[132]

> Sie tragen den Geist der alten Sänger und Fabulierer in die Moderne. Deswegen eignen sich ihre Geschichten auf ideale Weise für das Hörbuch. Mit der Konsequenz, dass das Hörbuch das Medium für mündliche Erzählung ist, begannen wir 2007 afrikanische Roman mit exzellenten Theaterschauspielern zu vertonen und als Edition "Afrika erzählt" (*ibid.*)
>
> '[African writers] carry the spirit of former singers and story tellers into modernity. Audiobooks are hence a perfect fit for their stories. We started our "*Afrika erzählt*" series in 2007 to showcase African novels with the voice of excellent theater actors, precisely because audiobooks are the ideal medium for oral storytelling.'

While I fully subscribe to the logic that audiobooks represent a fitting medium for these texts, presenting all African writers as carriers of the *griot* tradition[133] is somehow problematic since griots are specific to Western Africa and contributes to an already oversimplified representation of African literatures.

The concept of continuum is part of my own epistemological approach. However, my reasoning is based on the identification of specific features that characterize well-identified texts. In other words, it is because all the texts examined in my study are characterized by sound motifs that I consider their potential afterlife as audiobooks, whose format naturally emphasizes their sonic grammar. It is important to reiterate that sound motifs are not an inherent feature of African novels, but peculiar to some writers, and sometimes only specific texts from these writers. Texts by Joyce, Grass, Queneau, Pinget, to name but a few, are extraordinarily enhanced by audio recordings. Most of Grass's and Joyce's texts have been available as audio recordings for a long time and in many languages. Grass recorded many of his texts himself. Joyce recorded *Anna Livia Plurabelle*, a section of what would later become *Finnegans Wake*; his recording helped readers relate to his singular aesthetics and eventually accept it.

From a translation point of view, it is critical to give full consideration to the audio format, which inherently amplifies the aural poetic structures of texts, especially since audiobooks publishers intend to translate more of their upcoming titles (Kozlowski 2017).

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132. http://www.afrika-erzaehlt.de/afrika-erzaehlt_2_0.html (Accessed September 27, 2018).

133. Publisher's website: http://www.afrika-erzaehlt.de/afrika-erzaehlt_2_0.html (Accessed September 27, 2018).

7. Translating in a digital era

One of the newest developments in digital publishing is an application[134] that allows readers to seamlessly switch from an e-book to its audiobook version. This concept called "paired edition" provides consumers of literature an enhanced experience that takes into account their reading situation at any specific point in time. As I pointed out earlier, the consumption of audible content is on a steep rise, especially among the youngest segment of the population. While the biggest market for audiobooks remains the United States for now, the industry is now expanding into international markets. Audible, the largest audiobook publisher, offers content in 38 languages and created a platform called ACX that brings together authors, narrators, and sound engineers. This platform allows emerging authors who want to skip the written version altogether to focus solely on the audiobook format.

From a translation studies point of view, what these rapidly changing materialities of publishing and modes of consuming literature suggest is that we can no longer translate with the written page in mind only. Farah's last novel, *North of Dawn*, came out simultaneously in print, e-book, and audiobook in 2018. This reality lends force to Burkey's observations about the complementarity of different modes of reading (2013) and suggests that improved sound literacy will undoubtedly generate new expectations. More generally, digital content inherently presupposes a fluidity between media and requires the translation community to fully realize that what is translated might be read aloud at any point in time, whether by screen readers for practical purposes or professional narrators in the case of literary and artistic productions in general. The diversification in audience literacies demands to move away from unhelpful semiotic compartmentalization and embrace the need for fluidity.

Aural affordances act as magnifying glass amplifying the series of stylistic micro-decisions taken by translators, and more specifically those pertaining to the melopoetic structure of the text. As such, these affordances emphasize how the poetic signatures of African writers are re-presented in translation and foreground the translators' ideological stance, including their capacity to embrace the literacies of the Other.

134. Audible's Whispersync for Voice requires readers to have both a Kindle eBook and its corresponding Audible audiobook ("paired edition").

Conclusion

This book intends to shed new light on the perception of African literatures and its implications for translation purposes and will hopefully provide a basis for future research.

I started with the premise that aesthetic choices reveal the ideological stances of translators and proposed to examine six works of fiction, their geneses and receptions, and their translations. I set out to analyze how sound patternings, which are intimately anchored in the authors' native literary traditions and form the guiding principles that underlie the very literary power of their works, were downplayed or bolstered in translation, thereby revealing the translators' filters and larger ideologies, and the extent to which the translators' perception of the original texts were shaped by the prevailing critical discourse accompanying the reception of those texts.

The following summarizes salient observations and key findings. First, the fact that oral and written literatures have rarely been successfully examined together and that critical tools implemented in one area are rarely carried over to the next creates a divide that is unhelpful for apprehending the texts studied in this book since these are informed by oral literary palimpsests. Second, the generic elasticity that characterizes many African works of fiction is detrimental for fictional texts whose cognitive meaning and larger significance are intricately tied to their sound patternings (Smith 2001). Since the existence of specific forms in fictional works and the necessity to translate those forms are obscured (Berman 1999), no clear expectations are established for translators of fiction in that regard, as opposed to those set for translators of texts labeled as poetry, with the result that fiction work translators benefit from a relative license (Berman 1999, Smith 2001). Furthermore, the question of genre as a "critical condition of the object's legibility" (Porter 2011: 252) points to Eurocentric taxonomies that ascribe universal values to categories whose very existence is grounded in the Western opposition between prose and poetry (Dessons and Meschonnic 2005). Third, an examination of Western literary and translation studies scholarship reveals a certain reluctance, discomfort, or deficiency engaging with sound as a legitimate cognitive element in works of fiction. The ancillary value attributed to sound motifs in fictional texts results in a lack of tools and critical apparatuses for properly apprehending them for translation purposes. Fourth, an examination of the diachronic evolution of

the critical discourse on African literatures revealed that works of fiction have long been primarily examined as anthropological accounts, as social and political commentary on events related to African countries rather than as works of literary arts in their own rights. Those trends within the critical discourse are in turn reflected on the translators' perception of those texts. Some of the translations analyzed in this book, namely Farah's translation by Bardolph and Djebar's translation by Blair, are strikingly contrasting examples of the extent to which critical discourse can shape a translation project.

In the six case studies, I collected data and generated criteria for evaluating them, systematically combining the analysis with contextual observations. I proposed three weighting factors, which may also be envisioned as variables, that contribute to shaping the translators' decision to embrace sound motifs in their translations. Factor 1 is concerned with the degree of recognition of the writer's oral literary tradition, Factor 2 relates to generic taxonomy and the political or poetical labeling of the text, and Factor 3 pertains to the background and filters that shape translators as decision-making agents.

From a hermeneutic point of view, sound motif as a concept predicated on motivation, recurrence, and frequency, and which lies at the core of this study, was helpfully articulated through the lens of Folkart's (2007) and Tymoczko's (1999) respective paradigms of valency and metonymic translation. Both frameworks shed light on translation as a decision-making and prioritization process as translators engage in textual archeology. Such prioritization should be interpreted as a reflection of the translators' filters and ideologies. In other words, analyzing the translators series of micro-decisions as metonymic reveals their personal valencies, motivations, and their overall politics of translation. Both valency and metonymic translation act as magnifying paradigms that highlight the formidable decision-making power and responsibility of the translator as "agent, the person who acts" (Spivak 2000: 397), the one who chooses to select and echo certain aspects, and downplay or discard others according to their many filters whose layers make up their personal ethics. Another potent paradigm for sound motifs in translation, which goes hand in hand with the two previous ones, is what Berman called underlying networks of signification. While sound motifs networks may go unnoticed by regular readers, although their workings on a cognitive level are undeniable, they are nonetheless part and parcel of a broader and coherent writing strategy and should be manifest to translators as super readers.

In my final considerations, I suggested intermediality as a helpful framework in a translation studies perspective. Intermediality is an invitation to transcend generic and medial categorization and readily allows us to envision the contexts of production of the texts studied here as being anchored in the authors' oral literary heritages. The intermedial framework provides adequate conceptual tools

for reframing translation in a rapidly changing digital landscape. As audiovisual modalities, reading materialities, and the traditional notion of reading itself are exponentially challenged, the divide between what is received by the eye and what is received by the ear is increasingly blurred, and books as artifacts consumed aurally are on the rise. This disruption, evolution, or revival of the aural, however one prefers to consider it, has a critical impact on the value placed on sound motifs and, more generally, the place of sound within the decision-making tree of translators.

I hope that the theoretical and methodological approaches implemented here for examining specific works of African fiction and their translations will encourage further discussions on a topic that deserves and demands much more attention.

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Index

Starting with the premise that aesthetic choices reveal the ideological stances of translators, Laurence Jay-Rayon Ibrahim Aibo examines works of fiction by postcolonial African authors writing in English or French, the genesis and reception of their works, and the translation of each one into French or English. Texts include those by Nuruddin Farah from Somalia, Abdourahman Ali Waberi from Djibouti, Jean-Marie Adiaffi from Côte d'Ivoire, Ayi Kwei Armah from Ghana, Chenjerai Hove from Zimbabwe, and Assia Djebar from Algeria, and their translations by Jacqueline Bardolph, Jeanne Garane, Brigitte Katiyo, Jean-Pierre Richard, Josette and Robert Mane, and Dorothy Blair.

The author highlights the aural poetics of these works, explores the sound motifs underlying their literary power, and shows how each is articulated with the writer's literary heritage. She then embarks on a close examination of each translator's background, followed by a rich analysis of their treatments of sound. The translators' strategies for addressing sound motifs are contextualized in the larger framework of postcolonial literatures and changing reading materialities.

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