An Appraisal of the Translation of Proverbs and Idioms in *God's Bits of Wood* (The English version of Sembene Ousmane's *Les bouts de bois de Dieu)*

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Abstract

This paper is an appraisal of the translation of proverbs and idioms in Sembene Ousmane's Les bouts de bois de Dieu, a novel which has been translated into the English language as God's bits of wood by Francis Price. The translation of proverbs and idioms is one of the cultural problems that confronts every translator who translates a text which originates from a culture that is different from that of the translator. This is because proverbs and idioms are all constituents of language and language is an aspect of culture. The objective of translation is to impart the knowledge of the original text to the foreign reader. Sometimes proverbs are translated literally but, in most cases, they are not translated word for word. In such cases, the translator looks for equivalents in the target language. Adopting the Interpretive Method, this paper concludes that the translator failed, in many instances, in the translation of meaning as contained in the proverbs and idioms found in the novel.

Key words: Proverbs, Culture, Translation, Language, Values.

Introduction

The translation of proverbs is one of the cultural problems that confronts every translator who translates a text which originates from a culture that is different from that of the translator. According to Herbert Igboanusi (2004:217) several texts of modern African writers in European languages are typical adaptations of the oral style of the written tradition. There is a

preponderance of proverbs, figures of speech and idioms in direct transportation from the indigenous African languages. The language is, at most times twisted and fashioned out to suit the African experience in order to reflect the African world-view in a Western language. Sembene Oumane is one of such African writers who have achieved their adaptive use of English with vitality, keeping within the norms of the English language while at the same time capturing the idioms and nuances of his own indigenous Wolof language. Ousmane makes an immense use of proverbs, similes, personifications and metaphors in order to describe and evoke, in the reader's imagination, the cultural atmosphere in which actions unfold. Before going any further, we shall attempt some definition of terms.

What are proverbs?

Proverbs are meant to perform some social functions. Ajiboye (2012) asserts that proverbs are spiritual in that they are taken from the deep recesses of the sender and they go deep into the innermost of the receiver. The Concise Encyclopaedia defines a proverb as a succinct and pithy saying that is in general use and expresses commonly held ideas and beliefs. According to Solomon (2019), proverbs are of significant value in the language of members of the community, particularly, amongst rural people. Writing also about proverbs, Ojo (2015) opines that they are reflections and expressions of wisdom, ethics, philosophy and beliefs of a given society. This is why Wende (2017) submits that the wisdom in proverbs can resolve what nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction could not solve.

From the foregoing, no gainsaying that proverbs are of immense importance in every culture. Thus their faithful translation should be of paramount importance to every translator. This is because, though the imagery may differ from culture to culture, the fundamental message, wisdom and beauty remain the same, such that readers can benefit from the messages of proverbs from alien cultures.

Translation

The phenomenon called "translation" has been defined in many ways by many scholars. According to Eugene A. Nida and Charles R. Taber (1974:12), translation consists of reproducing in the receptor language, the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style. A natural rendering of the ST (Source Text) into the TT (Target Text) should fit into the receptor language and culture. This means that translation is the reproduction of textual materials from one language into another while maintaining the invariance. For John C. Catford (1965:20), translation is:

> the replacement of textual material in the SL by equivalent textual material in another language, that is, an operation performed on language whereby a text is substituted in one language for a text in another.

For Peter Newmark (1991:27) translation is transferring the meaning of a stretch or a unit of language, the whole or a part of a text, from one language to another. Another scholar, Roman Osipovich Jakobson (1959), gives three types of translation in his attempt to define the concept. The three types of translation he identifies are intra-linguistic, inter-linguistic and inter-semiotic. This definition is derived from the Peircean idea of interpretation. Intra-linguistic translation (otherwise known as "rewording") is "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language." Interlinguistic translation (also called "translation proper") is "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of some other language". Intersemiotic translation (called transmutation), is "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems."

While Jakobson talks of "signs", Susan Bassnet (1991:2), like Newmark, prefers to use texts. She defines translation as a concept that:

> …involves the rendering of a source language (SL) text into the target language (TL) so as to ensure that the surface meaning of the two will be appropriately similar and the structures ofthe source language will be preserved asclosely as possible but, not so closely thatthe target language structures will beseriously distorted.

Yet another renowned scholar in the field of translation, Lawrence Venutti (1995:17) gives another definition of the term as a re-writing of an original text, that is, an attempt to produce a text so transparently that it does not seem to have been translated. This definition tallies with that of J. P. Vinay and J. Darbelnet (1977:20) who define translation as "le passage d'une langue A à une langue B, pour exprimer une même réalité", ("the passage from a language A to a language B to express the same reality"[*our translation*]).

Culture

Culture is generally believed to refer to the way of life of people. In this article, the definition by Kukah (2007) is preferable. It says " a people's culture is the universe that incorporates the essence of life expressed in their songs, dances, dress, food, stories and so on". Thus culture covers all aspects in the lives of people in a community.

Language

According to Edwards (1985:15) language is important in ethnic and nationalist sentiments because of its powerful and visible symbolism. It becomes a core symbol or rallying point.

Values

The relationship between culture and values is very strong. J. J. Macionis (1998:34) defines values as "culturally defined standards of desirability, goodness, and beauty that serve as broad guidelines for social living".

Summary of the novel

Ousmane Sembène's *Les bouts de bois de Dieu* is an African novel depicting the colonial era in an African society. It is a novel of action and counter-action, bluff and counter-bluff. The events of the strike on the Dakar-Niger railway line between October 10, 1947 and March 19, 1948, provide the circumstances of the novel. The railway and the colonial authorities on the one hand and the indigenous railway workers and their families on the other, enact the harrowing drama of confrontation typical of the colonial times. For making demands for better working conditions, the strikers in the novel are mowed down, beaten to the point of laceration, imprisoned, killed, deceived and their families incarcerated to break their spirit and sabotage the strike. The black railway workers choose delegates to present their demands to the white authorities and also take charge of negotiations. Most of the meetings ended in violent disagreements. Although the emphasis of the narrative is on collective heroism, one can still distinguish a leader, Bakayoko, who was the source of inspiration and encouragement for all the strikers. He was the symbol of the true, bold, uncompromising, selfless African fighting for the good of his people. The events in the story cover Bamako, Thiès and Dakar. The colonial masters stopped the supply of water and grains to the black communities to intimidate the workers, yet the strike continued. Then the women joined the men in the struggle and conducted a long march of protest in solidarity to their men. The workers achieve victory in the end, and this optimistic ending is the whole point of the novel.

Translation of proverbs and idioms

Idioms and proverbs exist in all cultures since they are all constituents of language and language is an aspect of culture. There is something very remarkable about proverbs and idioms. This is the fact that there exists a strong affinity between proverbs and the environment. This is evident in the symbols used by the speakers or the coiners of the proverbs and idiomatic expressions. If the community is in a riverine environment,

symbols used in their proverbs will portray the environment. Proverbs will be coined around symbols that have to do with water, fishing, boats, fish, baits, and so on. In *Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu,* the symbols we are going to encounter in the proverbs and idioms are going to be different since Senegal is more or less in the Savannah belt of Africa where the vegetation is not very dense and food crops here are mostly grains. We want to examine how Francis Price, our translator, has translated the idioms and proverbs in *Les bouts de bois de Dieu* into English. Henceforth, we shall refer to *Les bouts de bois de Dieu* as LBBD and *God's bits of Wood* as GBW, and we shall begin with the example on page 14.

(i) Niakoro-la-vieille écoutait d'une oreille les épouses des hommes absents. *Tel un berger à quelques pas de son troupeau*, elle semblait les surveiller (LBBD p. 14)
Old Niakoro was only half listening to the wives of the absent men. She seemed, rather, to be watching over them, *like a shepherd not far distant from his flock* (GBW p. 1)

(ii) Tu n'as jamais vu une grève, toi!…Des soldats vont venir. Ils tireront. Et toi, au milieu des hommes, tu seras *comme une chèvre au milieu de chameaux en débandade*. Tu n'as donc pas peur? (LBBD p. 19)

You have never seen a strike!...Soldiers will come, and there will be a shooting. And you – in the middle of the men you will be like *a sheep in a stampede of camels.* Are you not afraid?. (GBW p. 5)

(iii) Devant elle, coupée en deux par une alleé centrale, la foule s'entassait jusqu' à l'estrade. Des corps et des têtes, des crânes rasés ou crépus, des haillons noircis de cambouis. Les visages avaient perdu toute personnalité; *comme si quelque gomme géante était venue effacer leurs traits particuliers,ils avaient pris un masque commun, le masque anonyme de la foule* (LBBD p. 23)

On either side of a central aisle the crowd before her pressed solidly up to the foot of the stage – a collection of bodies and heads, of shaven skulls and
woolly ones,, of rags blackened by axle grease. The faces seemed to have lost all trace of personality. *As if some giant eraser had rubbed out their individual traits they had*
taken on a common mask, the anonymous mask of a crowd. (GRW p. 7)

(iv) …Niakoro, que sais-tu de demain?..-Et tes cheveux blancs, à quoi te servent – ils, alors?
-Ne confonds plus respect et savoir. Te souviens-tu du dicton: *Avant d'avoir les cheveux blancs, il faut d'abord les avoir eus noirs* (LBBD p. 29-30)
"...Niakoro – what do you know of tomorrow?...And your white hair? Of what use are they then? Do not confuse respect with knowledge. Do you
remember the old saying – *Before one has white hairs, one must first have them black?* (GBW P. 12)

The first two examples show clearly the geographical position of the society where the proverbs and idioms originate from. The cultural symbols *berger, troupeau, surveiller, chèvre, chameaux, débandade*in example (ii), all point to the dry, sandy vegetation of the savannah and desert regions. Price has translated them as *shepherd, flock, watching, sheep, camel, stampede* respectively. These renditions are all right except that Price has translated *chèvre* as *lamb* instead of goat. The French equivalent of *lamb* is *agneau* while the English equivalent of *chèvre* is *goat.* The *goat* and the *lamb* are two different animals.

The mistranslation of *chèvre* as *lamb* by Price, changes the message of Sembène in the target language. The lamb is an animal that thrives well in the desert, just like the camel and the cattle. Most of the time these three

nomadic animals are reared together and move together in a flock. So the stampede of camels would not be such a novel experience for the lamb. The lamb, though weak and gentle, would be on familiar grounds and might find its way out of the stampede. Taking the goat now, that is, the image used by Sembène in the source text, we see an animal that is not used to the dry climate. Goats are usually sheltered from harsh weather conditions unlike the sheep that sleep in the open air. Sembène's use of the symbol *goat* in the context given in example (ii) was to show that the person would stand no chance of survival in case of any riot. The mistranslation of that symbol does not do justice to the message of the source text.

Apart from this, the translation has been adequately done using literal translation.

Example (iii) is an idiomatic expression and the simile has been rendered acceptably in the target language. The proverb in example (iv) has also been translated literally. This is because the lexical items in both the idiom and the proverb all have English equivalents and the author has written in very simple language.

(v) Maimouna était aveugle, mais non pas une misérable,au contraire. *Telle une déese de la nuit, elle promenait son corps majestueux à la peau d'un noir*
sombre, sa tête altière, son regard vide… (LBBD p. 40)
Maimouna was blind, but this is not to say that she was pitiable. Far from it.S*he held her splendid, smooth-skinned body like some goddess of the night, her head high,her vacant glance…* (GBW p. 16)

(vi) Les hommes tournaient en rond, se rassemblaient *comme les bêtes d'un troupeau apeuré* que *l'on mène vers un piège,* les soldats se déployèrent en tirailleurs, s'intercalant,l'arme à la main… (LBBD p. 47)

The men were going round in circles, huddling together *like frightened animals being led into a trap*. With their weapons held ready, the soldiers spread out in a thin line… (GBW p. 21)

(vii) Mon époux doit être plus fort que moi. Voilà les champs de mon père, Et Voilà les *gops* abandonnés, répondit Goumba N'Diaye (LBBD p. 46-47)
My bridegroom must be stronger than I. There are my father's fields. And there are the abandoned *scythes,* replied Goumba N'Diaye… (GBW p. 21)

(viii) Doudou savait qu'il devait parler, mais rien, ni les hommes, ni le paysage ne l'inspiraient *Tel un animal lov*é *sur lui-même,* une peur somnolait dans sa poitrine. Il craignait qu'elle ne s'éveillât. (LBBD p. 52)
Doudou knew that he should speak to them, but nothing in the landscape or the sight of the men themselves encouraged him. Fear slumbered in his breast, *like a tightly coiled serpent,* and he was afraid of awakening it. (GBW p. 24)

(ix) Dejean le remplaça. Depuis, il avait gardé le poste. Dejean continuait *ses allers et retours d'ours en cage.* Une sourde colère le travaillait. (LBBD p. 58) Dejean had replaced him, and he had held the position ever since. An unreasoning anger stirred in him now, as he *walked back and forth like a bear in a cage* (GBW p. 29)

(x) Donner les allocations familiales à ces polygames? Dès qu'ils ont de l'argent c'est pour s'acheter d'autres épouses, et *les enfants pullulent comme des fourmis* (LBBD p. 59)

Give family allowance to these people? The minute they have some money they go out and buy themselves another wife, and *the children multiply like flies* (GBW p. 29)

(xi) Il se leva enfin, rejetant sa couverture. Arona détourna son regard.
La nudité porte malheur le matin, dit-il.
Cache ton derrère, *vai*, il est *aussi noir qu'un cul de marmite* (LBBD p. 72)

At last he stood up, dropping the blanket, and Arona turned away. "Nakedness in the morning brings bad luck", he said, ' At least cover up your backside*; it's as black as the bottom of a pot* (GBW p. 37)

In examples (v) and (vi), Sembène writes using simile. Price has translated *une déese de la nuit* as *some goddess of the night*, which is quite appropriate. In example (vi), the word *troupeau* has not been translated. Here is what we mean.

Sembène: Comme les bêtes d'un *troupeau* apeuré.
Price: Like frightened animals.
Our Suggestion: Like a *herd/flock* of frightened animals.

In examples (vii) and (viii), Price has shown great skill. He translates the loan-word *gops* as s*cythe.* The explanation of the meaning of *gop* is given by the author as footnote in the following way:

Instrument de culture en usage au Sénégal. Longue perche armée à son extrémité d'une lame en forme de croissant qui sert à racler la terre (LBBD p. 47)

The object g*op* may not have a direct English equivalent but the footnote gives the reader the idea that it looks like *a sickle* or *a scythe*. Price's direct use of s*cythe* in his translation saves the trouble of writing any footnote.
Again in example (viii), the source text says: *Tel* un *animal lové sur lui-même*

Price: *Like* a *tightly coiled serpent.*

The name of the animal has not been mentioned by Sembène but the verb *love* (lover), which means *to coil itself up,* is an indicator that the animal could not be anything else but a serpent. Price's modulation here is quite apt.
Examples (ix), (x) and (xi) are all similes but there is mistranslation in example (xi).

The case of mistranslation in example (x) is in the translation of *fourmis* as *flies* by Price. The English equivalent of *fourmis* is *ants* while the French equivalent of *flies* is *mouches*. When it comes to numbers, it is ants that usually move in hordes and not flies, except where there is a carcass.

Example (xi) is also a simile and the humour therein has been captured very well and transmitted into the target language adequately.

(xiv) La femme se planta devant Lahbib, l'oeil brillant, les narines ouvertes *commeune chatte prête au combat.* (LBBD p. 223)
She planted herself in front of Lahbib, her eyes glittering and her nostrils flaring *like a cat preparing for battle* (GBW p. 141)

(xv) - Je ne parle pas avec les couche-toi-*là!* Avant que les hommes aient pu intervenir, Awa hurlait *comme une truie qu'on égorge.* (LBBD p. 224)
"I won't even speak to the likes of you", Awa shouted, and then, before the men had had the chance to intervene, she was screaming *like a sow in a slaughter house.* (GBW p. 142)

(xvi) Depuis la grève, il faisait sa cuisine lui-même, du riz, rien que du riz et maintenant le riz lui-même était épuisé. Personne n'était venu lui apporter la moindre bouchée, personne n'était même venu le voir. - J*e suis abandonné,* pensait-il, *comme un vieux chien qui ne vaut plus qu'on le nourrisse*. (LBBD p. 208)

Since the strike he had prepared all of his meals himself – rice, nothing but rice, and now even that was gone. No-one had come to bring him even a morsel of anything to eat; no one had even come to see him. "I am abandoned", he thought, *like an old dog who is no longer worth his keep.* (GBW p. 130-131)

(xvii) Puis, se penchant, il prit dans ses bras le corps si légère de la vieille Niakoro. Un quart d'heure plus tard, la maison *ressemblait à une fourmilière qu'un coup de tálon aurai bouleversée* (LBBD p. 167)

Then he bent over and lifted the bird- like weight of Niakoro's body in his giant arms. A quarter of an hour later the house *resembled an anthill crushed beneath a careless heel.* (GBW p. 104)

(xviii) Keita le Vieux avait assisté à toute la séance… Il se leva avec lenteur: – *J'ai quelques pincées de sel à jeter dans la marmite,* dit-il, et il ajouta avec un regard en direction de Tiémoko,- si toutefois vous voulez bien de mon sel. (LBBD p. 153)

Fa Keita, the old one, had been present throughout the trial… Now he rose slowly to his feet.

I have a few grains of salt to contribute to the pot, he said, and then he added, glancing in Tiémoko's direction, if, that is, you are willing to accept my salt. (GBW p. 94)

The examples we have cited so far are, mostly, idiomatic expressions. Price has translated many of them suitably but there are some we consider not so suitable.
The idiom in example (xiv) has been satisfactorily translated.

We would like to comment on the translation of the idiom in example (xv). The operative word in the proverb is the verb *égorg*é, which Price has left untranslated. He has transposed the verb into the noun, *slaughter house.* Peter Newmark, as well as other apostles of the literalist school of thought, that is, word-for-word, which insists that the translator should use the exact equivalents of the words and expressions in the source text would, perhaps, submit that this transposition has killed the poetic beauty of the idiom in the source language. The screaming of a sow that only finds itself in the slaughter house cannot be compared to the screaming it will release when its throat is being cut. This is the level of the comparison in the simile as used by Sembène. Thus these literalists might suggest the following translations:

(a) like a sow whose throat is being cut.
(b) like a sow which is being slaughtered
(c) like a sow that is being slaughtered

However, for Nida, Delisle, Lederer, Seleskovitch, Israel and other theorists of the Free Translation school of thought, who advocate the transfer of sense, the image of the *slaughter house,* as evoked by Price, actually adds to the poetic beauty of the scene. Looking at the scene semiotically, it can be seen that it is, actually, the picture of a screaming animal (any animal) being killed in a *slaughter house*that Sembene is painting in the source text, and not isolated words which depict the act of killing. Thus, adopting the Interpretive Approach, we are of the opinion that Price has transferred the meaning into the target language.

The expressions in (xvi) and (xvii) have been acceptably rendered in the target language. In example (xviii), we see the typical way of speaking by African elders. This confirms Achebe's famous saying that proverbs are like palm-oil with which elders eat words. Here, we see Fa Keita, the old one, using a proverb to make his contribution during the trial of Diara, one

of the saboteurs of the strike in the narrative. Instead of saying he had a few words to contribute to the trial process, he decided to use imagery, such as *pincée du sel* and *marmite*. Price has captured this aesthetic quality as he uses literal translation to render the idiom in the target language. The symbol, *pincé*e *du sel*, (a few grains of salt), refers to the words spoken by the old man, and *la marmite* (the pot), refers to the trial.

(xix) - partir, partir, avec un soleil pareil? Tu veux notre mort?

C'était la grosse Awa qui avait parlé, la femme de Séne Maséne, le contremaître. Commodément installée le dos au ballast, la tête sous un petit arbuste, elle *semblait la reine des arbeilles entourée de ses ouvrières.* (LBBD p. 300)

"Go on? With a sun like this? Do you want us dead?" It was Awa who had spoken, the wife of Séne Maséne, the foreman carpenter. Comfortably installed, with her back resting against the embankment and her head in the shade of a little shrub, she looked *like a queen bee surrounded by her drones* (GBW p. 193)

(xx) Bakayoko ne répondit pas. Ces morts l'oppressaient. Il eut peur de perdre confiance.

- Penda aussi*…*, murmura-t-il et, d'un seul coup, peut-être pour la première fois de sa vie, le découragement s'abbatit sur lui *tel un épervier qui plonge sur sa proie.* (LBBD p. 328)

Bakayoko said nothing. The news of these deaths oppressed him, and for the first time he was afraid of losing his confidence in the future. "Penda, too…"he murmured, and suddenly discouragement stabbed at him like the claws of a hawk plunging on its prey. (GBW p. 211)

(xxi) Lorsqu'un enfant monte en haut d'un arbre il ne prévient personne, mais s'il tombe il crie et tout le monde accourt. Il en est de même pour cette grève. (LBBD p. 334)

When a child climbs to the top of a tree, he tells no-one what he is about to do, but if he falls, he cries out and everyone comes running to help. That is the way it is with this strike. (GBW p. 215)

(xxii) N'Deye Touti l'attendait. Elle tenait d'une main son chapeau de paille et son baton, de l'autre son baluchon. Une bougie posée sur une jarred éclairait faiblement la pièce. La lueur venant d'en bas dessinait des ombres sur le visage de la jeune fille. *On dirait le masque de bronze d'une déesse Iféenne,* pensa Bakayoko. (LBBD p. 345)

N'Deye Touti was waiting for him, holding his old straw hat and his walking stick in one hand and his pack in the other. The room was lit by a single candle set in a jug on the floor, and the light, striking forward, formed pools of shadow on the girl's face. "She looks like the bronze masks of a goddess of Ife". Bakayoko thought. (GBW p. 223)

(xxiii) Comme la terre se durcit sous le soleil de la saison sèche, le cœur lui aussi devient dur sous les rayons de malheur. (LBBD p. 346)
As the earth hardens beneath the harsh suns of the dry season, the heart also hardens in the flames of unhappiness. (GBW p. 224)

(xxiv) Debout en plein soleil, la tête protégée par un casque cônique à l'ancien mode, il tapotait ses mollets nus du bout de sa cravache en attendant le défilé des prisonniers. Ceux-ci apparurent en rangs devant lui. *Ils ressemblaient à des criquets dont ils avaient la maigreur, les jambes sans chair et la démarche saccadée.* (LBBD p. 357-358)

He stood iin the sun in the centre of the enclosure, his head protected by an old-fashioned conical helmet, tapping the naked thigh beneath his army shorts with the tip of a riding crop, waiting for the prisoners to file out. They were lined up in the ranks in front of him by the guards, *seeming with their jerky steps, their hairless legs and fleshless bodies, more like an assembly of locusts than of humans* (GBW p. 230)

(xxv) Pour le directeur, c'est fait… mais Isnard n'est pas parti malgré l'ordre qu'il reçut. Les femmes se regardèrent:
– Allons au *Vatican* dit-l'une d'elles. Nous le délogerons, ce rat aux oreilles rouges.

– Allons – y, dit la Séne. *Quand on enterre un mort et qu'on voit encore son orteil, il faut jeter une poignée de sable.* (LBBD p. 376)

Dejean is gone… but Isnard hasn't left yet. The women looked at each other. Let's go to *the Vatican,,* one of them shouted. *We'll dislodge that red- eared rat! Let's go;* said Séne. *When you can still see the toes after you have buried the body you have to throw in a little more sand.* (GBW p. 242)

The cultural elements in example (xix) and (xx) namely, *abeilles* and *ouvrière*s, *épervier* and *proie* have been adequately translated by Price as *bee*, *drones, hawk* and *prey.* In fact, Price has shown great skill by translating *ouvrières,* a general term, as *drones,* a specific and more apt equivalent given the context of bees. The sarcasm in (xxi) has been skilfully captured by the translator as he has used literal translation to render the proverb in the target language. Example (xxii) contains a very remarkable and tricky translation challenge to an unseasoned translator, that is, unseasoned in African culture. The linguistic devices *le masque de bronze d'une déesse Iféenne* is not the challenge per se but the fact that Sembène has formed an unusual adjective from the town *Ife.* Price has exhibited great insight as he has rendered this cultural specimen as *the bronze mask of a goddess of Ife.* The

proverbs and idioms in examples (xxii), (xxiv) and (xxv) have all been adequately transferred. Using word-for-word technique of translation, Price has transferred the aesthetic beauty in all the examples into the target language.

Conclusion

The concept called culture has serious implications for translation since language and culture are close relations. When one translates one translates the culture of the source text as well. This does not necessarily mean that a translator must go and live among the people from which a particular text originates in order to learn and understand their culture before attempting to translate the text. It has been asserted by a scholar that when it is an African that is translating a text of African origin impersonation is easier because the fellow will just be living an experience. This statement, in simple terms, means that it is just enough for a translator to be African for him to translate an African literary text perfectly and easily. This is quite parochial because Africa is so vast and endowed with different cultures. It is true that the translator under study, Francis Price, made some lapses in his translations of some cultural elements in the novel. However, it is yet to be proven that these lapses are caused by the fact that European and therefore found it difficult to impersonate. It is, also, yet to be proven that if Francis Price had been Wolof he would have translated *Les bouts de bois de Dieu* in a better way. The fact still remains that if he had, indeed, been of Wolof origin but born and bred in Europe, he would have still been a stranger to his culture. Every translator is faced with lexical, semantic, linguistic and meta-linguistic challenges in the course of translating any literary work, irrespective of the nationality of the translator.

We can conclude that, from the point of view of the Interpretive Approach, the translator has acceptably translated meanings in most of the proverbs and idioms reviewed and has also failed in doing so in a few cases. It is our fervent hope that someday, future researchers would take up the challenge

of comparing the translations of African literary texts by translators of African origin with those carried out by European translators in order to determine if nationality is a contributory factor to having successful and acceptable translations. We also hope that contemporary translation scholars will one day evolve a theory of translation for the translation of African literature written in European languages.

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