Europhonism, Transgression and Subversive Politics in Lola Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*

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Abstract When postcolonial writers insert their Indigenous *knowledges* in the body of texts written in any of the Metropolitan languages, two things are achieved: a (re)enactment of Manichean dualism or the creation of texts that trade their monolithic cultural identity for a syncretised configuration. Binary politics is re-enacted within the texts as various local epistemologies expressed through Indigenous language(s) struggle with hegemonic European language(s). The texts become a site of linguistic and epistemological contentions, as the major battles with the minor for supremacy. Rather than having a completely English/French/Portuguese African text, the reader is left with a potpourri of languages and episteme. This article builds on the foregoing contentions to revalidate the concerns of critics on the imperativeness of using Indigenous *knowledges* in African literature so as to end the marginality of Africa languages and literature in global literary scholarship. Lola Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* is analysed to expound this concern and indicate how an African writer employs linguistic/literary strategies to subvert Europhonism and prove that world literatures should embrace cultural plurality. The article submits that global knowledge production is not monolithic, but multifarious. It, therefore, calls for the recognition of other knowledge sources outside the purview of European epistemology.

Keywords world literatures; postcolonial African literature; Chinua Achebe; code-switching; pidgin English

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Introduction: African Writers and their Use of Linguistic Strategies

This article builds on the observations of some critics of African literature and interrogates their concerns about the perceived marginality of Africa languages in global literary scholarship. Drawing on criticisms of these critics, it provides a dialogic analysis and expounds the resonance of glocalisation that pervades some recently published African texts in which writers deliberately glocalise their Indigenous epistemologies using certain linguistic, cultural and literary strategies to achieve their aim. While this area of research in African literature has enjoyed good attention of scholars (Achebe 27-30; Wästberg 135-150; Marzagora 1-6; Okafor 1-17; Kunene 315-322; Ngugi 285-306; Wali 281-284; Tsaaior 1-17; Ayeleru 19-29; Dalley 15-34; Teke 71-81; Adeseke 49-59; Ukam 46-53), I contend that this aspect of African literature is still open to interrogation in view of the continuous interests of writers to borrow extensively from their Indigenous cultural resources for the enrichment of their creative works (Adeniyi[a] 87). The article studies Lola Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* (2010) with a view to ascertaining how meanings are generated in the text in view of the pervasive dominance of her Yorùbá epistemological perspectives, the feminist bias and political message of the text. The article argues that Shoneyin, like other third generation of African writers, pushes for the recognition of African knowledge production, and submits that the necessity of this recognition is "contingent on exploring abundant Indigenous epistemology in African culture" (Adeniyia 88).

Cultural gaps are bridged in African literature by a series of discursive strategies which African writers aptly deplore in their works to assert the identity, difference and individuality of their literary tradition. While some may be doing it out of conscious awareness; others, however, may not have set out to consciously use their works as sites of subversive politics, but do so out of their creative ingenuity. In her assessment of some of the strategies often used by African writers, Aduke Adebayo reveals that the writers now use "transgression, integration, translation, transliteration, transposition, deviation, word-coinage, and mixture of levels of language and code-mixing […] now termed 'textual heterolingualism' or 'textual plurilingualism"' (see Ayeleru 23-24). Bill Ashcroft et al. also list "syntactic fusion; neologisms; code-switching; untranslated words" (123) as discursive tools used by writers to express differences between African and European cultures,

while Zabus, identifies relexification, pidginisation, calquing as some of the linguistic strategies common among African writers to subvert Europhonism in their writings. All these linguistic strategies are *transgressive* tools, and transgression is a model of subversion. It is a metonymic model used to subvert normativity and gainsay Universalist tendencies or break boundaries of orthodoxy. Put differently, transgressive discursive model relates to art in which "orthodox moral, social, and artistic boundaries are challenged by the representation of unconventional behaviour and the use of experimental forms" (Glomb 211).

The use of tool in literary writings corroborates Alastair Pennycook's learned observation that "We do not live in a world where people conform mindlessly to the putative rules of language; we live in a world of language transgressions, impossible without some order worth transgressing, and made possible by the desire for difference" (Lee 55). Pennycook further describes the model as a "profound and methodological investigation of how to understand ourselves, our histories and how the boundaries of thought may be traversed" (Lee 55). To transgress the *rigid* orthodoxy of a major language, a writer from the Global South who wishes to use the language to convey their peculiar Indigenous experiences may adopt Chinua Achebe's belief on the use of imperial language to express native *knowledges*. According to him, "I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings" (30). Being a *new English* that is *altered* to accommodate local contents, as Achebe submits, is indicative of a break from the normal practices that rigidly enforce strict adherence to English grammar, syntax, lexis and structure, or narratology. It is a domesticated language that "re(present) the linguistic manipulation of English for reasons of cultural particularity and authenticity" (Tsaaior 3). This is why Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Obi Wali, Daniel Kunene, Chinweizu et al. descended heavily on early African writers for their mimicry of European literary tradition.

The critics' envisioning revolves around the production of African literature that is independent of European linguistic domination. While some of the critics advocate absolutism, the others believe that European language can still be used but has to be domesticated in such a way that it carries the weight of African thoughts, philosophy, folklore, and epistemology without losing its originality. This is where the paradox lies! How does one use a foreign language to express Indigenous *knowledges* without transgressing basic structures, values, and strength of the language? When two different languages meet in the body of a text, the corollary is the birth of a language form that is neither uniquely exogenous nor uniquely Indigenous. Examples of this

language form are what C.B. Lawrence calls "*Konglish*, *Chinglish*, *Janglish*" (Lee 53), which I regard as parallels of *Yoruglish*, *Igboglish*, *Hausaglish*, *Shonaglish*, *Gandaglish*, and many other varieties all over the world. These new varieties of the language emerged from a "potential contact vernaculars […] between English and the local language, which normally include morphology, semantics and syntax but may also include pronunciation, pragmatics and discourse" (Lee 53). A good example of an African writer who writes in a Metropolitan language, and transgresses the canonicity of the language by domesticating and subjecting the structures, grammar, logic and beauty of the language to his Indigenous cultural, linguistic and epistemological groundings is Amos Tutuola. Tutuola is a study in subversion, as he deploys transgressive linguistic strategies in his novels so vehemently that he is accused of writing *Yorùbá English* (*Yoruglish*) or uneducated, rotten English. Gabriel Okara also reveals that he (Tutuola) often uses "vernacular expressions" (Ngugi 288) so as to be able to capture or express his African ideas, philosophy, folklore, and imagery to the fullest extent possible (Ngugi 286).

Translation and Other Discursive Agencies Used in African Literature

Translation, as a linguistic strategy, involves interpretation of "meaning of a text in one language […] and the production, in another language, of an equivalent text […] which ostensibly communicates the same message" (Ashcroft et al. 215). It is, according to M. R. Pinheiro, the decoding of "a written piece of discourse from the source language according to our private language but considering the private language of the original writer and the original context as much as possible, and then coding that piece again according to our corrected-to-an extreme vision of the target language and context" (122). While Pinheiro identifies three types of translation: cultural, literal and artistic; Reito Adachi, in his study of audiovisual translation (AVT) of Hayao Miyazaki's anime, bifurcates translation techniques into: larger categories and smaller categories (183). Under the larger categories are "Liberal" and "Literal" translations, while smaller categories comprise "Interpolation", "Deletion", "Replacement", and "Literal Translation". In his table of translation techniques, he further breaks down the smaller categories into: interpolation comprising "Amplification" and "Substitution"; deletion comprising "Deletion"; replacement comprising "Adaptation, Description, Discursive Creation, Generalization, Particularization, Transposition"; and literal translation comprising "literal translation" (Pinheiro 183).[1]

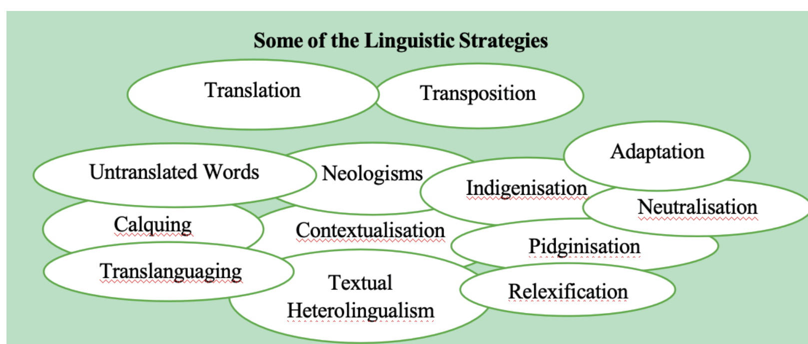
According to him, amplification is the discursive strategy of adding detailed

1 This table can also be found in Pinheiro's article (123).

information, which includes compensation technique "defined as recreating the source language (SL) effect by strategically using target language (TL) linguistic devices or reproducing the effect in a different part of the text. […] It also includes creation, which means adding a whole new sentence to fill in pauses and silences" (Pinheiro 183). He defines substitution as "replacement between linguistic elements and paralinguistic elements, including verbalized paralanguage" (Pinheiro 183-184), while deletion is the suppression of information taken from the source language in the target language (Adachi 184). In adaptation, cultural terms from the source language are replaced with the ones from the target language, while description entails substitution of "a word or phrase with a description of its form or function" (Adachi 184), just as generalisation is the use of "a broader and more general term than its original context to refer to a specific object" (Adachi 184). Adachi also defines particularisation as the opposite of generalisation, meaning to use "details or specific examples of a more general and neutral idea" (185). It is imperative to know that translation as a "form of interactive communication" (Granqvist 31) possesses subtlety. This artfulness explains its use not only for linguistic interaction, but for subversion by postcolonial writers in their quest to undermine European politics of homogenization (Granqvist 37).

While transposition is to "change a grammatical attribute" (Adachi 185) of the source language in a target language, literal translation is the technique used in translating "a phrase or a sentence […] word for word to express in another language the exact meaning of a word, or the form of words, of the source language rather than to convey the sense or function of the original" (Adachi 185). Another form of translation is calquing (loan words) in which words are translated verbatim from one language to another. This linguistic technique can be used by writers to engender "lexical competition" (Andronache 151) between one language and another. The competition according to Liliana Andronache, "can only end in two different and divergent ways: either in lexical addition (the loanword will be included in the vocabulary of the target language) or in lexical replacement (the loanword will replace the native term, which will be perceived as obsolete)" (151). Though Andronache conceives European/superstrate language as the beneficiary of calquing, I hold a different view. This is because in the African speech community where writers with nationalist awareness are making frantic efforts to reverse the major-minor, centre-periphery configuration of exogenous-Indigenous languages; English, French, Portuguese are always at the receiving end, as the writers deliberately use words to either complement or replace the subsisting ones in the dominant languages. Charles Teke further asseverates the

foregoing in his submission that though imperialist languages are agents of Western epistemologies, they have paradoxically been "dominated within the matrix of anti-colonialist struggles which used these same languages as strategic assets in quite different communicative and discursive contexts" (72). According to him, "What one discerns is the susceptibility of imperial language in the possession of the postcolonial 'subject', and the clear demonstration that imperial language ceases to be a symbol of dominance over the colonised and instead serves as a weapon of attack or redress against the coloniser" (72). Below is a diagrammatic representation of the metonymic linguistic strategies often employed by African writers.



Other linguistic strategies often used by African writers to transgress (subvert) imperial language(s) include contextualization, neologism, textual heterolingualism/code-mixing, relexification, acculturation, code-switching/translanguaging, neutralization, untranslated words. Contextualisation implies the linguistic approach of inferring meanings from the words or information items surrounding a concept. It is to place in proper context the concept being studied. In his comment on Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Zabus provides an insight into the use of this strategy in meaning inference by stating that:

> Achebe introduces Igbo words to the non-Igbo reader either by explaining them within the dialogue or by having the reader infer from the context or the syntax or both whether the Igbo word is a noun phrase, an adverbial or a nominal construction and then what it means. This riddling device, which we identified as contextualization, involves the non-Igbo reader in a guessing game. (180)

Neologism involves word-coinage, especially when a writer inserts new words or phrases from a minor language into the major language which may either be

translated or untranslated. Code-switching characterises bilingual or multilingual situation (Wardhaugh 88) in which a speaker switches "back and forth of languages or varieties of the same language, sometimes within the same utterance" (see Koban 1174). The switch can be effected at inter-sentential, intra-sentential, or extra-sentential levels, and this is done for several reasons, among which is to create ethnic affiliation and assert prestige about a given language (Ayeomoni 91; Redouane 1921; Wardhaugh 101). It is inter-sentential if the switch occurs "from one language variety to another outside the sentence or the clause level, as in "Le dije que no queria comprar el carro. *He got really mad*" (see Koban 1175). It is intra-sentential if the switch is from "one language variety to another at the clause, phrase, or word level within a single utterance, as in "Abelardo tiene los *movie tickets*" (see Koban 1175), and extra-sentential if the switch is done to insert "tag elements from one language into an otherwise monolingual discourse in another language, as in "*Porque estamos en huelga de gasolina, right*?" (Koban 1175). Textual heterolingualism describes "texts or performances where speakers place more than one linguistic system into play at the same time" (Pratt 288), and this is done in written literature "when writers undertake to explore linguistic difference as a social force, a site of power, and a source of knowledge" (Pratt 289). It is a kind of code-mixing languages in a text that resultantly creates a scenario in which one language serves as a host, while the other serves as a guest. In this condition, heterolingual elements are interchanged between the languages. However, since "Languages are […] outwardly disposed to seize elements from others with which they come in contact" (Pratt 290), "the heterolingual elements introduce a foreignness into the host language and literary system, a strangeness that carries both danger and possibility, threat and promise, fear and desire" (Pratt 288).

Indigenisation can manifest as pidginisation and relexification (Zabus 6), and the two models are used by African writers who are "strategically seeking decolonization and liberation from the vast colonial discourse in which writing was previously rooted" (Zabus 7). Pidginisation is a "linguistic process that occurs when people who do not speak the same language come into contact. It involves the simplification of the contacting language and the exploitation of linguistic common denominators. It is essentially an oral process and limited communication" (Todd 19). It expresses the condition of pidgin, which, in turn, is a linguistic phenomenon "believed to have an English-language base upon which are imposed features from indigenous languages" (Zabus 56). Pidginisation is associated with low-level of education in West Africa, possibly for its exiguous linguistic features. This is why it is regarded as lacking "articles, the copula, and grammatical inflections, rather

than those they possess, and those who speak them have often been treated with disdain, even contempt" (Wardhaugh 58). It can be regarded, in this sense, as a marginal transgressive linguistic mode used by African writers, mostly from West Africa, to break the homogeneity of Metropolitan language(s) in (West) African literary writings and introduce a variant of Europhone language that contends with the language of the centre for social space and recognition; after all, Europhonism serves as a "site of discrimination, [and] of hatred of Other" (Zabus 52).

Towards the Indigenisation of Superstrate Language in African Literature

Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* is a social realist text that demonstrates the age-long cultural practice of polygyny in a rigidly phallocentric African (Yorùbá) setting. It also interrogates "the inferior categories through which society judges" the womenfolk (Eze 315). Being overtly patriarchal, men in a typical African society exert undue influences on the womenfolk, one of which is their supposed *inalienable rights* to have more than one wife (Adeniyi[b] 35). In the cultural setting of the text, men can marry as many women as possible, but it is abominable for a woman in the society to have more than one husband at the same time. The protagonist in Shoneyin's novel, Baba Segi (Ishola Alao), is in a polygynous relationship having married three illiterate women (Iya Segi, Iya Tope, and Iya Femi). He later marries the fourth wife, Bolanle – a university graduate – who is unable to conceive. Subjected to what Catherine Williams and Simeon Sonde call "Housewifization" (100), the women are made to depend on their husband's income for their total sustenance (Williams and Sonde 100). They are cowed into obedience by their male chauvinist pig (MCP) (husband) whose androcentric views aften take better part of him. Baba Segi exerts control on the women, flaunting his machismo or manliness as a badge of pride unbeknown to him that all the children he thinks are his are sired by another men. Being a victim of male infertility, Baba Segi's wives put him in dire straits by exploring other avenues of making babies, while their husband is left to fool himself bragging about the sexual conquests of his women. The coming of Bolanle into Baba Segi's large family brings the narrative to the climax, as her inability to conceive leaves a chasm that Baba Segi seeks to fill at all costs. Having a barren woman under him flattens his ego and depletes his sexual or fertility prowess. The news of his infertility is eventually revealed at a hospital where he has gone to conduct a medical test. With the intricate weave of the narrative, Shoneyin unleashes her feminist anger on the patriarchy/

polygyny[1] to lay bare its inherent labefaction and inconsistencies. She puts up an argument that gender exclusivism or arrogance is inhibitive to the quest for social growth and gender inter-subjectivity, as more havoc is done to the social fabric the moment social groups are at friction with each other. Above all, Shoneyin invests her energies into the novel to respond pointedly to the emasculation of women and their objectification or thingification by the regressive androcentric structures in the society (Adeniyib 57; Eze 311).

In spite of the feminist tenor of her opus, Shoneyin demonstrates her profound proclivity for the zeitgeist of the third generation of African writers, which, according to Chielozona Eze, is partly to address contradictions noticed about Africa and its multiplex cultures, instead of being "bound to the ideological need to explain Africa to the world" (311). The writers are "creating a new type of language that draws the readers into African daily life" (Onwumere and Egbulonu 157) similar to the dramatic shift in style witnessed in "The 1970s […] [when] writers like Ahmadou Kourouma of Cote d'Ivoire introduced his native Malinke linguistic features into French" (Onwumere and Egbulonu 157). Being a part of the third generation of African (women) writers, Shoneyin conspicuously responds to the aspects of her culture she perceives to be oppressive to women (Eze 311), and draws "attention to certain ethical questions such as the relation between the African man and the African woman" (Eze 311). As noticed earlier, a *new* thematic addition of third generation of African writing is the writers' exploration of their collective consciousness and the deployment of values immanent in their Indigenous cultures in fictional narratives written in European languages. This is done to assert their Africanity, subvert unwittingly, or transgress European literary canonicity, deflate the Western vaunted ego and, most importantly, rescue African literature from its abjected status to which it is confined. It is imperative to state that this practice is not in any way new, as many of their predecessors also wove their Indigenous epistemologies into their narratives, though such a practice may not be as pronounced as it is now among the third generation of African writers. Situating the practice in the present may further validate the past-present inter-textual dialogue, since the present always involves the past in fictional interrogation

1 As a matter of fact, advocates of polygyny have advanced a polemical argument to justify "plural marriage" (Williams and Sonde 96) among Africans against Western disapprobation of the practice, even though the West favours homosexual relationship, which has received a widespread condemnation in Africa. One of the justifications for polygyny among Africans is placed at the background of polygamy/homosexuality binary, and couched in a poser: "Between polygamy and homosexuality, which is better?"\

of human conditions (Dalley 18; Eze 311).

To demonstrate the zeitgeist of her generation and its undercurrents, Shoneyin explores the vast repertoire of her Yorùbá cultural terms which undergird the people's epistemology, ontology, and cosmology to subvert or taper imperial English in her fictional narrative. Most importantly, she demonstrates the practicability of mixing Indigenous language (its lexis, grammar, syntax) with that of an exogenous language to create ambivalent texts without compromising standard or creating paradoxes. Consequently, she employs linguistic (metonymic) strategies to achieve her goals. Some of the dominant strategies used in the novel include: translation, contextualisation, textual heterolingualism (code-mixing) and translanguaging (code-switching). I conceive the linguistic strategies as metonymic when they are positioned by writers to represent a whole, or used as a substitute for someone, groups, concept, or things (Adeniyia 91). Shoneyin decidedly translates many Yorùbá words, cultural terms and belief systems into English to possibly weaken the strength of the English language. She uses various translation techniques, including literal translation, replacement or substitution to achieve this aim. When certain words or statements are translated from one language to another, the idea is to make the translated text reachable to non-speakers. More often than not, when the translation is done the target language bears the brunt of "translation politics" (Adeniyia 91). Though the language still looks like its original self, when checked properly its strength may have been weakened as it is compelled to carry the weight of the source language (Adeniyia 87). Shoneyin indicates this trend in her text as the Yorùbá and English languages engage each other in the politics of subversion. For instance, while the entire Baba Segi's family is watching their favourite television programme, *Afowofa*; Shoneyin translates the signature tune of the soap opera from Yorùbá to English:

Talaka nwa paki
Olowo nwon'resi
Igbi aye nyi o
Ko s'eni to m'ola

The impoverished search for cassava flour
While the rich consume rice by the measuring bowl
The tide of the earth turns
No one knows tomorrow. (9 italics in the original)

The above is a straight literal interpretation of a song from Yorùbá to English. In literal interpretation, a near perfection of language-to-language meaning is achieved, but the politics of subversion seems to play out as the song rendered in Yorùbá language jostles for space with the English translation of the song. Shoneyin's aim in that part of the narrative is to indicate the delectability of a TV programme often heralded by a familiar sign tune. However, she could still indicate this without creating translation politics. The excerpt brings to the fore the North-South dichotomy, and how an *othered* language seeks a re-ordering of African literature to privilege Indigenous over exogenous tongue (Adeniyia 87). Shoneyin deliberately domesticates English by using the language to express her Yorùbá Indigenous thoughts. Just as Zabus comments on Taghi Modaressi whose Persian narratives contain his Indigenous thoughts; Shoneyin, like Modaressi, and any other postcolonial writer, translates her Yorùbá thoughts into English, but the translation "suggest[s] another language. It has a different 'tempo', a different rhythm" (Zabus xvii).

Statements, phrases or clauses in the novel are couched in indigenized (Yorùbá) English. They include: "And your wives will not come and drive me out with a broom?" (7), "Kole is as thin as an old man's cane" (10), "Why are you not feeding my son?" (10), "I feed him but the food disappears as soon as it reaches his belly. That boy would eat this entire house if you let him" (10), "Then cook him this entire house. And then when he has eaten that, serve him the neighbour's too" (10), "A woman cannot know the weight of a child until she has carried one in her womb" (13), "Iya Femi picked me up with her eyes and threw me to the floor" (55), "Has this woman's head scattered that she now scrubs my mouth? Have my words become so insignificant that they can now be contested?" (62), "I will not let you destroy this home with your excess. You have allowed the concubine to become the husband. I have not known anyone to worship a penis the way you do!" (86), "She will hear it from today" (93), "Let Bolanle know that people are like water. And the same waters that the streams divide meet again in the great ocean" (141), "What sense does it make to treat ringworm when the body is consumed with leprosy?" (188), "Segi, do not delve into matters that don't concern you!" (205), "I could not believe that Iya Femi's mouth could still be so sharp after all the evil she had done" (210), "May the dogs eat your mouth" (232), "Keep these words in your left hand lest you wash them away after eating with your right" (238). Specific excerpts rendered in domesticated (Yorùbá) English include: "Does your blood not boil when you see other women carrying their babies on their backs? Do tears not fill your

eyes when you see mothers suckling infants? You of all people should be willing to try everything! Offspring make our visit to this world complete! Do you want to remain a barren maggot?" (43), "Iya Femi, you are in the habit of saying things that are too big for that little mouth of yours. If you are not satisfied with the way I share provisions, take your ingratitude to another man's house. Mind you, make sure you are the first wife and not a lowly third" (49).

The foregoing quotes are reminiscent of the belief that some writers often think and express their thoughts in Indigenous languages before translating the thoughts into any European language of their choice. Gabriel Okara is one of the African writers who advocate this narrative approach. According to him, the best way to make effective use of local ideas and oral traditions in a foreign language is "to translate them almost literally from one African language native to the writer into whatever European language he is using as medium of expression" (Ngugi 288). He believes the exogenous language can also be emulsified with native African systems or African ethics (Adeseke 52). Okara admits that this may be seen as a way of desecrating the exogenous language, but on the contrary the approach affords him the opportunity to capture vividly the images of African speech by first of all expressing himself in his Indigenous language, rather than in English. With the translations of her thoughts in indigenized English, Shoneyin has been able to construct a cultural difference within the body of a text rendered in Europhonism. She has been able to reify postcolonial epistemology and bridge the metonymic gaps between English and Yorùbá by studding a Europhone African narrative with local words, cultural terms and beliefs (Zabus xvii).

Apart from translation techniques used by Shoneyin, other dominant linguistic strategies in her novel are translanguaging/code-switching and literary heterolingualism/code-mixing. I conceive these terms as being monolithic to avoid dragging the reader into sociolinguistic conundrum which attempts to delineate the language contact phenomena, since both concepts refer to language alternation which may include "sentences and/or phrases from both languages in a long and successive sentence or paragraph" (Mabule 340). In fact, foremost linguists, such as Dell Hymes, Eyamba Bokamba, Ronald Warhaugh, conceive the concepts as monolithic. The concepts refer to the use of more than one language in a conversation, even though switching of language is believed by some linguists to be done on purpose. One of the purposes could be to enable interlocutors "identify themselves as members of certain social groups and [...] negotiate their position in interpersonal relations" (Mabule 340), or create group solidarity, language integration, and assert the writer's/speaker's identity. Shoneyin switches between

English and Yorùbá with ease mostly at intra-sentential level: "Baba Segi raised his arms so his *agbada* could be prised off by Iya Segi's deft fingers" (8), "She did the same with his *buba* and Baba Segi stumbled" (8), "*I* have never had reason to come here before, Ogun bears witness" (32), "Most weeks, Iya Femi got Sunday because she enticed him with her groundnut stew, her *ekuru* with shrimp sauce, her yam balls, her *asun*" (48), "Do you really think I would go to a *babalawo*, let alone ask for something that would harm you?" (60), "In those days, it was common for wealthy men who owned *gari* factories in Ibadan to dazzle village farmers" (79), "His skin was oily and supple whereas my father's was flaky and dry like *orogbo* shells" (79), "My father shouted my name and instructed me to turn out a large mound of amala to be accompanied by efo made from the freshest spinach leaves I could find" (81), "Iya Segi smiled but I could see her chest thumping beneath her *buba*" (83), "Iya Segi spoke sourly of me and referred to me as *apoda* – the stupid, slothful one – behind my back" (87), "I had become quite adept at making *fufu* and like my mother, I had a stash of money under my mattress" (97), "'*Eyin Iyawo o ni m'eni*.'" "'*Ase o*!'" (102), "Ten years ago, I stood beneath that same *agbalumo* tree not far from here" (110), "Before I could give him the *eja kika* I prepared for him, he was fast asleep (138), "At least she still remembered how much I loved *awin* (142), "She was sifting *elubo* into a wide-mouthed basin" (143), "She thought I would die in hospital but Eledumare did not permit it" (144), "Indeed! Or you would be left with a plain lump of *moyin-moyin*" (195).

Code-switching or translanguaging in *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* (2010), as hinted earlier, is functional and deliberate; it is not done unconsciously. As a matter of fact, it is used as a linguistic tool to "leave the Western reader fragilised and at times incapacitated to discern full textual meaning without trying to engage with the strategically infringing language" (Teke 77). One of the functions Shoneyin uses the linguistic strategy for is to make it to serve as a vehicle for cultural signification and identity. She similarly employs the strategy to indicate the otherness of African language, culture and literature in a Europhone African text, and expose how a mother tongue and an exogenous tongue are at odds, leaving the latter triumphing over the mother tongue in question (Zabus 2). To this end, Shoneyin ingeniously subverts the English language to portray her disavowal of Europeanisation of African literature, since the literature of any people often constructs a definitive image or defines the language of the people (Ukam 46). To start with, some of the cultural terms in the text are italicised and untranslated, while quite a few are translated but not italicised. Cultural terms like *agbádá* (a long loose flowing gown), *bùbá* (blouse), *èkuru* (a delicacy made from

beans without pepper and palm oil), *àsun* (spicy smoked barbecued meat), *gaàrí* (powdery granules made from cassava), *babaláwo* (a diviner or an *Ifá* priest), *orógbó* (garcinia kola), *àgbálùmọ̀* (African star apple), *èlùbọ́* (yam/cassava flour), *àmàlà* (a delicacy made from yam/cassava flour), *ẹja kíká* (rounded smoked fish), *mọ́iń-mọ́iń* (a delicacy made from beans with pepper and palm oil), *àwín* (African velvet tamarind) are Yorùbá cultural terms used to foreground a *marginal* language/culture inserted into the body of a Metropolitan language/culture. These terms, therefore, become metonymies standing for an *othered* language, culture and literature within the body of an imperial literature, language or culture. Considering the structure and mode of use of these terms, their intra-sentential usage suggests alterity, difference, asymmetry, and marginalisation of African language, culture and literature in a cultural space to which it is autochthonous. It reads like the terms are caged and handicapped by a powerful hegemonist Western force, just as it suggests metaphorically that African culture, language and literature are under the heteronomy and oppression of the West. However, the reverse may be the case, because the writer uses an Indigenous language to covertly attack an imperial tongue.

Aside using this narrative style to carve a niche for an African language, indicate its subalternity, construct African identity for Shoneyin and work, and possibly signify her bilingual identity; another hermeneutics derivable from the insertion of Yorùbá words into English is to taper the strength of the English language, and make it possible for Shoneyin to create a system of communication (the *Yorubaised* English language) that is *double-barrelled*. This can be proved by the use of metonymic elements, such as "shit-scraper" (56), "lick-spittle" (56), "*apoda*" (87), "fat frog" (130). These phrases are metaphors (parts) that stand for a whole — indexing some of Shoneyin's characters. My major concern with the metonymies is that they are transferred from the Yorùbá language to English either directly or indirectly. Their direct transference indicates they are left un-translated, while the indirect transference shows that they have been translated. In the sentence, "One day, that fat frog, Iya Segi, asked if I'd noticed that Iya Tope had left all the house-cleaning to me" (130), Iya Femi uses the metaphor as a part to represent the whole; that is, she uses a particular body feature of Iya Segi to ridicule her, since she is chubby. Iya Tope describes herself as a "shit-scraper" to denote her humiliated despicable condition in Baba Segi's house. It is an indirect translation of Yorùbá "*akógbẹ̀*" — an abusive epithet to show her ignoble plebeian descent, just as "lick-spittle" is a metaphor used metonymically to reflect her supposed oleaginousness. In fact, this condition is foregrounded in Iya Segi's tongue-lashing of Iya Tope whom

she describes as *apọ̀dà*, a simpleton translated by Shoneyin as "the stupid, slothful one" (87).

While pidginisation is used sparingly as its usage is only confined to the conversation between Bolanle and the thief who owns a bric-a-brac stall at Sango market: "'Dat one come all the way from Italy" (44), "'I won't take a kobo more than five hundred naira from beetifu' lady like yase'f'" (44), Shoneyin employs relexification to nativise or indigenise the English language. When Iya Femi visits her village to revenge the shabby treatment she receives from her uncle after the death of her parents, her uncle's wife renders the English exclamatory sentence: "Don't kill me!" (135) as "*Don-key* me" (135). Even with the thief's statement, Shoneyin uses calquing to achieve the same purpose: "beetifu" (44), instead of "beautiful", "yase'f", instead of "yourself", in the superstrate language. In all, Shoneyin turns her text into a site of postcolonial contestation where her Indigenous language competes with the Metropolitan language. Most interpretations of *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* (2010) have interrogated the feminist discourse of the text, neglecting the more critical concern of a creative writer who uses language uniquely to reveal her unconscious. We submit that the unconscious of Shoneyin and the text goes beyond feminist tensions, polyandry, social and economic structures underlying her Yorùbá (Nigerian) society to signify the fixation of a postcolonial African writer on the need to taper European language used in African literature. She interrogates the subalternity of African literature and constructs a different image for it as a corpus that has migrated from the margins to the centre of world literature.

Conclusion

Lola Shoneyin's novel affirms the thrust of this article about the imperativeness of mining Indigenous cultural resources and deploying local epistemology in African literary scholarship. The approach helps to carve a niche for African literature and also construct a unique image for it among the pantheon of world literatures. She employs various translation techniques to reflect the otherness of the Yorùbá language, but covertly uses the language as a counterpoise to English that arguably misrepresents her Indigenous African thoughts and obscures (her) authorial judgement or mutes her (authorial) voice. Shoneyin particularly employs translation techniques, calquing, translaguaging, literary heterolingualism, relexification, and pidginisation to taper the strength of English used in her novel. These transgressive techniques enable her to advocate linguistic freedom for African literature and push for the use of nativised Europhone language(s) in African literature. Her advocacy

can, similarly, be interpreted as a reaffirmation of one of those five conditions, which Moyibi Amoda believes are important identity markers in naming an African literary writer. These markers, according to Amoda, must include conditionalities, such as: the necessity of the writer being African, must use traditional themes from oral literature, use African symbols, use linguistic expression taken from African languages, and use local imagery, that is, images from immediate environment (Ilo 13). While these defining elements help to determine the imprint of Africanity in belles-lettres; Shoneyin, just like other third generation of African literary writers, has demonstrably indicated the possibility of adopting a nativised European language in her writings. This adoption helps her to carve a unique image for African literature in her novel. The image doesn't project African literature as a copycat literature that mimics European narratology, *it rather portrays it as* a postcolonial literature that artfully vitiates Europhone *tongues in African literature, and,* in the process, exposes *its numerous inadequacies in naming African epistemological* thoughts and realities.

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