



African Influences Dutch Translation

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African Influences, Dutch Translation

On the Translation of Orality and the Influences of African Languages

in Marlon James's *Black Leopard, Red Wolf*

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the influences of African languages and African oral traditions on the language used in the novel *Black Leopard, Red Wolf* by Marlon James, and subsequently, explore in what ways these influences might manifest themselves in a Dutch translation. The main focus lies on the inclusion of terms and phrases in different African languages; the varied use of nonstandard language, and especially nonstandard syntax; idiolect of characters; and the inclusion of oral poetry. A translation-oriented source text analysis is presented, whereby different translation strategies are considered in order to choose the ones deemed most suitable to the translation of this text. Finally, these strategies are put to the test in the translation of six fragments from the novel, in which the abovementioned aspects come to the fore.

Key words: African literature; literary fantasy; translation; nonstandard language; fictional dialect; orality

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Introduction

Black Leopard, Red Wolf (2019) by Marlon James is a multifaceted novel of which many aspects are worthy of research and analysis. The novel can be placed in the genre of epic fantasy, drawing not from European mythology, as is often the case in this genre, but from African mythology instead. Even though genres such as fantasy and science fiction are less underestimated than they used to be, they are often still put away as genre fiction or popular, mainstream work, rather than works of potential high literary value (Mandala 8-9). The fact that this divide still exists, is demonstrated by the following concern expressed by James's publisher, who worried that the novel would be "too literary for fantasy fans, too fantastical for literary fans" (Preston). The work, however, certainly deserves the literary label and has indeed received it, for example by *The New Yorker*: "[It is] not just an African fantasy novel but an African fantasy novel that is literary and labyrinthine to an almost combative degree" (Tolentino).

Both James's use of language and the plot of the novel are rather complex, and many influences of African languages as well as African cultures and traditions can be found in the novel's form and content. This thesis will focus on the language that is used in the novel, explore in what ways it is influenced by African languages as well as cultures, and discuss the translation issues that arise as a consequence. Orality hereby constitutes an important concept. It is a concept that is very much ingrained in many African cultures, and "African oral tradition" and "African oral literature" are notions on which much is written (e.g. Finnegan, Sackey, Tapping). Gyasi names some elements that African writers often incorporate in their literature, and enhance its oral character: "[I]magery, proverbs, myths, folktales, dramatic factors, and lyrical language" (85). The concepts of storytelling and trickster tales are also important aspects of African oral tradition (Sackey 397, 400), and play an integral part in the novel, since it is a frame narrative in which the story is told by the main character,

an unreliable narrator, and stories are nested within stories.

The research question central to this thesis is the following: how can the oral character of the language used in *Black Leopard, Red Wolf*, as well as the influences of African languages on the way language is used in the novel, be transferred to Dutch? The aspects that will be analysed include the use of words and phrases of different African languages in the novel, nonstandard syntax and idiolect in dialogue, the varying use of Standard English and Non-Standard English, and the inclusion of verse.

In the first chapter, the author and the book are introduced, the novel's reception is discussed, a summary of the plot is provided and some of the novel's themes are discussed. In chapter two, an analysis of the source text is given, whereby the focus lies on the abovementioned aspects. In chapter three, a translation-oriented analysis is given, whereby the focus lies mainly on the fragments that are to be translated. Relevant translation problems and possible translation strategies, regarding the aspects discussed in the previous chapter, are explored, whereby parallel texts are also used to see how other translators have dealt with similar translation problems, so that ultimately, a translation strategy can be formulated. Some more general translation problems are also discussed. In chapter four, the translations of several fragments of the novel are presented, whereby footnotes are used to clarify decisions where needed, for example when a deviation from the discussed strategy is made, to explain how specific problems are dealt with, or to discuss other translation options that were considered. The conclusion reflects upon the findings of the analysis and the pragmatic value of the translation strategies that are used, and suggests promising directions for future research.

In total, six fragments have been translated. It was deemed preferable to choose more than two or three fragments, since the novel is so substantial and diverse. By choosing more fragments, from different parts in the book and in which different characters play a role, the fragments put

together provide a more complete representation of the novel, whereby all of the discussed aspects come to the fore. The source text of the translated fragments can be found in Appendix A. Each fragment is preceded by a short introduction that provides some contextualisation and sheds light on the events that led up to it. The appendices also include the two songs sung by griots, epigraphic proverbs provided with each of the novel's parts, and an elaboration on the research done to find out more about which African languages might have been used in the novel.

Chapter One:

Marlon James and *Black Leopard, Red Wolf*

Marlon James

Marlon James (born 1970) is a Jamaican writer. In 1991, he graduated from the University of the West Indies in Jamaica, with a degree in Language and Literature, and in 2006 he graduated from Wilkes University in Pennsylvania, USA, with a Creative Writing degree (“Marlon James”). Before starting his writing career, James worked in advertising. He left Jamaica for the United States of America, to escape homophobia and to have a better chance to succeed as a writer (Wright). He is Writer in Residence as well as Associate Professor of the English department at Macalester College in Minnesota (“Marlon James”). Besides *Black Leopard, Red Wolf*, his latest work, he has written three other novels. *John Crow’s Devil*, his debut novel, was published in 2005. In 2009, *The Book of Night Women* was published and in 2014, *A Brief History of Seven Killings* was published, for which James won the prestigious *Man Booker Prize* in 2015, the first Jamaican writer to do so (“Marlon James”). His last two novels are especially substantial, *A Brief History* counting slightly over seven hundred pages and *Black Leopard, Red Wolf* being more than six hundred pages long. James stresses the importance of doing research, and states that he spends years doing research before he even starts writing, and continues to do so while writing (Wylie).

The first three novels are set in Jamaica; the current novel is set in a fictional Africa. All of James’s novels take place in a historical context, be it in colonial or postcolonial times, or in the (fictional) Middle Ages, in which the current novel is set (Hawcock). *Black Leopard, Red Wolf* is his first fantasy novel, although his earlier novels also contain some supernatural elements such as magic and ghosts. Critic Lori Feathers calls James “masterful at writing dialogue” and identifies the need to belong and identity as recurring themes in his work: “James’s narratives explore how the inherited

signifiers of sex, race, and tribe preordain identity, while at the same time he dismantles the notion that these determiners are binary and immutable” (Feathers). She also recognises influences of oral storytelling tradition in James’s previous works (Feathers).

Black Leopard, Red Wolf

Black Leopard, Red Wolf came out in February 2019. James often states in interviews that he wished to write a story in which he could recognise himself and that he “realized how sick and tired [he] was of arguing about whether there should be a black hobbit in *Lord of the Rings*” (Jones “Marlon James”), so he decided to write his own fantasy series. *Black Leopard, Red Wolf* is indeed the first book of a planned trilogy, in which the same story is told, but from the perspective of different characters. The sequels will be called *Moon Witch, Night Devil* and *The Boy and the Dark Star* (Kean). James has stated that readers will probably come to regret the way they have come to regard certain characters; the moon witch Sogolon, for example, is not portrayed in a very positive light in the novel, but she will be the main character in the next book, so that her part of the story will then be told (Morgan). Early on, James has jokingly compared his novel with *Game of Thrones* (Jones “Marlon James”), a statement which, despite the fact that it does not seem such a fruitful comparison at all, has stuck, since it is often repeated in interviews and reviews. Film rights for the novel have already been sold, to Michael B. Jordan’s production company Outlier Society and Warner Bros (Brown). Jordan starred in the successful Marvel film *Black Panther*, which also features a fictional Africa and can be considered a milestone due to its mostly black cast (Smith).

The novel has received many favourable reviews; in reviews that are less positive, often complaints can be found about the novel’s difficulty to get through because of its meandering plot, vast number of characters and its non-straightforward language. Something else that many people find hard to deal with is the novel’s violence. James himself indicates that he does not wish to sugar-

coat or leave out things, and wants to portray violence in a violent way, so that it actually has an impact on people, as it should, according to him (Preston). One might indeed need a bit of a strong stomach to get through certain passages of the novel, but, contrary to what some reviewers claim, the violence is not completely unjustified. As James statement shows, it is meant to be unsettling and provocative. Many positive reviews also note that action scenes have a high pace and are reminiscent of comics, which James indeed states have been an important influence on him, since comic books “were easier to get hold of than books” when he grew up (Preston). Literary critic Michiko Kakutani recognises many references of a broad variety in the novel: to comics, literary works and works of fantasy, as well as African epics.

It has become quite clear that the novel can be seen both as a literary work and as fantasy. As Kakutani suggests, it also has close ties with the notion of an African epic. As James himself notes, epics, whether they are from African or European culture, “were written to be read out loud”, and thus inherently have a very oral character (Danis). Elsewhere, he notes that African epics are very complex and require an intelligent reader (Jones “Shape-shifter”), as could also be said of his own novel. In a definition of epics by Daniel Biebuyck, it is stated that epics “occur in many versions” due to their oral character; every performer tells the story in his own way (qtd. in Westley 100). This is reflected in the novel by the fact that the story will indeed have several versions, since it will be told by others in the novel’s sequels. Another definition acknowledges the supernatural: “An oral epic is fundamentally a tale about the fantastic deeds of a man or men endowed with something more than human might and operating in something larger than the normal human context” (Okpewho 34). In the novel, many supernatural elements can be found. The main character Tracker has a supernatural gift of being able to track people from huge distances by their smell. The world is also inhabited by many other supernatural creatures, such as vampiric monsters and shapeshifters.

Plot of the Novel

Since the book is so extensive, stories are told within stories continuously, and events are not presented in a linear way, it is quite a difficult task to give an accurate, but concise summary of the novel's plot, but an attempt is made. First, some general features of the novel are given. It is 620 pages long and divided into six parts, each of which is accompanied by an epigraph consisting of a proverb in an African language. A list of important characters and creatures who appear in the novel is provided, as well as several maps of the fictional lands where it is set, designed by James himself. No glossary of terms is provided, although James makes use of words and phrases from different African languages throughout the novel. The main character of the novel, who is also its narrator, is Tracker. Tracker tells his story to the "Inquisitor", while he is interrogated as a prisoner. Tracker is a man famous for his nose and infamous for his mouth; he has an amazing sense of smell which allows him to track down people or their things, and he is not afraid to speak his mind and often does this in a very blunt way. Early on in the novel, it becomes apparent that Tracker is an unreliable narrator, since he provides two endings to the same story, so that the reader cannot know what actually happened (James 8).

Tracker has left his parental home as a boy and experiences an identity crisis when in the birth village of his father, of the Ku tribe, he finds out that his father is really his grandfather and his brother and real father were killed by the rival tribe of the Gangatom. He meets the Leopard, a shapeshifter, in the wilderness and together they go on a quest for the Sangoma, who saves mingi children (children who are abandoned because they are thought to bring bad fortune). When they return, Sangoma's safe haven has been ransacked and they bring the surviving children to the Gangatom, who adopt them. Then they each go their own way, until the Leopard approaches Tracker with a request to participate in the search for a mysterious boy, where Tracker's extraordinary gift of smell may prove very useful. Most of the novel covers the search for this boy,

whereby only very slowly, the truth about the circumstances surrounding the boy's origins and disappearance as well as his current situation is revealed. Besides Tracker and the Leopard, others are also involved in the search for the boy, namely the witch Sogolon and her "demigod" Bunshi; Nyka, a former friend of Tracker, who betrayed him terribly; Nyka's partner, Nsake Ne Vampi; Sadogo, an Ogo (described in the novel's list of characters as "tall, mighty men who are not giants"; N. pag.); and Bibi, warrior and date feeder of the slaver Amadu Kasawura, who organised the search. As the story progresses the fellowship changes, some people drop out while others join, such as Venin, a girl the fellowship saved from being eaten by monsters, and later an intelligent buffalo, as well as the Kongorian prefect Mossi.

The story revolves more about the journey than about its end, which is already disclosed to the reader in the novel's opening lines: "The child is dead. There is nothing left to know" (James 3). At one point, Tracker states:

I tried to think of why I never think of this boy, not what he might look like, or sound like, even though he was the reason we were here. I mean, I thought of him when I tracked all that happened, but I was more taken with Fumanguru, and the lies of Belekun the Big, and the game both Sogolon and Bunshi were playing with information; taken by all who sought this boy more than the boy himself. (James 358)

Near the end of the novel, Tracker sums up the search in the following way: "[W]e did nothing but try to find a boy, for a reason that turned false, for people who turned false" (James 619). The novel exhibits a vast number of characters; as stated before, the fellowship does not stay the same during the search, and many other characters, people as well as monsters, are encountered throughout the search. At one point, when they arrive in the city of Dolingo, the fellowship – then consisting of Sogolon, Bunshi, Tracker, Mossi, Sadogo, the buffalo and Venin, who is now possessed by Jakwu, one of the many souls killed by Sogolon throughout her long life – is betrayed by Sogolon. They

manage to escape and almost kill the monsters who took the boy, and more importantly, they almost capture the boy, but ultimately they do not succeed. The vengeful Jakwu pulls Sogolon with him through one of the ten and nine doors, magical doors that the monsters use to travel with, and which the fellowship has also used once or twice, but which can be dangerous. The members of the fellowship believe Sogolon to be dead, but still continue their quest. At one point, they have finally managed to get hold of the boy, save him from the monsters who took him and return him to his mother, who turns out to be the King's sister and the boy the legitimate successor to the throne. The boy, however, escapes with the help of Sasabonsam. The boy then leads the monster Sasabonsam – brother of Asanbosam, who was killed by the Leopard in order to rescue Tracker on their first quest – to Tracker's newly formed family, consisting of the mingi children and Mossi, and kills them. Tracker, wrecked by grief, guilt and a thirst for revenge, then again embarks on a search for the boy and Sasabonsam, whereby he allies with former foes Nyka and the Aesi, a powerful sorcerer and the King's chancellor. Both Sasabonsam and the boy are eventually killed – Sasabonsam by Tracker and the boy by Nyka – while it turns out that Sogolon is not actually dead. Other than her and Tracker, many, if not all, of the people who at one point were part of the fellowship, have died. After the death of Sasabonsam and the boy, Tracker wanders off and after wandering “for days” (James 620), is arrested by the King sister, who blames him for the death of her child. Tracker ends up being imprisoned and interrogated by the Inquisitor, so that the story comes full circle.

Themes of the Novel

Obviously, storytelling in its own right is an important theme in the novel, since the whole of it is comprised of different stories and the reader is also constantly reminded of this by remarks of the narrator, such as “Shall I give you a story?” (James 3) and “You have come for a story and I am

moved to talk” (5). The idea of “violent violence” has also been touched upon. Violence is portrayed in a very raw way; it is given much attention and it is not clean, but bloody and filthy and horrendous. A few pages in, James already provides a fighting scene in gruesome detail: “Made a fist I did, then stuck two fingers out, like rabbit ears. Jabbed his left eye in the quick and pulled the whole thing out [...] I grabbed the rock that was my pillow and bashed his head until his face smelled fleshy” (5).

Truth is also a notion that keeps coming up in the novel. Since storytelling plays such a big role, what is really the truth is in fact constantly unclear. If you only hear one part of the story, how do you know that what you are hearing is actually true? The importance of the theme is reflected by the fact that characters often use the very word. The word combination “here is truth” is used thirteen times in the novel, after which usually comes a sincere remark or a confession, such as: “Here is truth: The Buffalo was the greatest of companions” (James 269). At one point a character notes: “[...] We don’t own truth. Truth is truth and nothing you can do about it even if you hide it, or kill it, or even tell it. It was truth before you open your mouth and say, That there is a true thing [...]” (384).

As was pointed out by Lori Feathers, both identity and sense of belonging are also important themes. Tracker does not feel like he truly belongs anywhere or to anyone, which subsequently makes it hard to formulate an identity. Tellingly, he does not use the name his parents gave him, but instead goes by the name of Tracker. He states: “My name was my father’s possession, so I left it by his gate” (8), as well as “Once I had a name, but have long forgotten it” (9). Later, Tracker states to “have always been an edge man, always on the coast, always by the boundary” (132). Although he gruffly states that he is not bound to anyone, in some vulnerable moments he expresses feelings of loneliness and in the end it seems that, whatever he may say, he has certainly bonded to certain people, which has the exact effect he so feared, for once again, he is eventually left utterly alone.

Another important concept is fluidity. This comes to the fore in a gender-related way; Tracker himself prefers men over women as his bedpartners, although he has slept with both. The Leopard sleeps with younger boys, such as Kava and Fumeli. Even Nyka, who has a female partner, Nsaka Ne Vampi, jokes about having wished to share Tracker's bed. Fluidity also plays a role in a more literal way, since there are many shapeshifters to be found in the novel, the most foregrounded one being the Leopard. The Leopard is sometimes also described as having sex while being in neither fully human, neither fully beast form, suggesting a whole new level of fluidity. In a conversation with Mossi, Tracker at one point rejects binaries:

“[...] There are only two things, Tracker: that which men of wisdom can explain, and that which they will explain. Of course you do not agree.”

“Just like all you men of learning. Everything in the world cooks down to two. Either-or, if-then, yes-no, night-day, good-bad. You all believe in twos so much I wonder if any of you can count to three.” (352)

Lastly, smell plays an important role, predominantly because of Tracker's excellent sense of smell. This is reflected in his storytelling as well, in which there is a great deal of attention for how people and things smell, such as here: “How I smelled the animal and how that smell got stronger, and how much people change smell when they hate, and fuck, and sweat, and run from fear and how I smell it, even when they try to mask it” (60). James states that he was inspired by speaking to a member of the Royal Society for the Blind in London, which gave the audiobook of James's *A Brief History* a commendation, since the descriptions in the book do not only rely on sight, but on other senses as well (Morgan). James was also taken by “the whole idea of the bloodhound, and that people would *use* him [Tracker]” (Morgan).

Chapter Two: Source Text Analysis

This chapter analyses the source text, focusing on elements that are relevant to the central research question: the ways in which orality is expressed within the language and the influences that African languages have on the novel's language. More specifically, the aspects that are analysed are the words and phrases of different African languages that James weaves into the English text; the nonstandard syntax that is employed, by some characters more than by others; ways in which idiolects of characters differ; and the inclusion of verse in the novel. The two concepts from the research question, influences of African languages and orality, often go hand in hand. For example, the proverbs that are used, or the nonstandard syntax that is employed and which reflects the way in which characters speak, link the novel's language to African languages and, in a broader sense, to African tradition, in which orality is a very important concept.

Proverbs

Influences of African languages and cultures can be seen throughout the novel in the way that James makes use of language. Words that originate from African languages appear within sentences that are otherwise written in English, and phrases and proverbs from African languages are used, sometimes only in the original language, sometimes only in translation, sometimes combined. Below, particular instances are discussed in detail.

As indicated earlier, the novel is divided into six parts. The start of a new part is indicated by a page that contains the number of the part, its title and its epigraph. The epigraph always consists of a proverb in an African language, whereby only the original proverb is provided on the page; no translation is given. Nowhere an indication is given of what the exact language of these proverbs is,

and in fact it seems to be the case that James uses several African languages (Danis). The fifth epigraph differs typographically from the others, in that dots below are sometimes used for the letters “o”, “e” and “s”: “O nifẹ oṣupa. Idi ti o n bikita nipa awṛn irawṛ” (James 521). This would seem to indicate that James uses Yoruba as the language of this proverb. Yoruba is an African language that uses dots below for precisely these letters to indicate the correct pronunciation (Asahiah 309). It is also a language in which proverbs take up an important role (Akanbi 26), so it might well be that this proverb derives from it. Since in the other proverbs no use is made of such typographical elements, these might be from another language, or several other languages, not all of which can be determined with certainty.

In an interview conducted by *Audible*, James states he has drawn from many different languages. He reveals that he did extensive research on Wolof, and also specifically mentions the languages Fon, Twi, Swahili and Yoruba (Danis). He further says that he was “drawing proverbs from dozens of languages”, that “quite a few of the proverbs in the scenes are in Swahili” and that he “drew from pretty much everywhere” (Danis). This makes it hard to pinpoint exactly which language is being used in each instance, unless one is an expert in many African languages. However, the use of these proverbs in their original language grants the overall novel an “African” feel and since most readers will not be able to discern what they mean exactly, it also provides a sense of mystery and the exotic.

It is interesting to note that the audiobook actually does provide a translation for the epigraphs (James *Storytel*; e.g. 00:00:45). A possible reason could be that it is more disruptive when only listening to a novel if words are uttered in an unknown language. A reader can, if so desired, take the time to ponder over it, or just read on without putting too much thought into it. The listener of an audiobook is more bound to the rhythm that the narrator has set and can only rely on the audio, so that foreign phrases such as this might come out of the blue and confuse the listener,

especially since no further context is provided. In a way this gives the listener an advantage over the reader of the novel, since he has access to the translation of the epigraphs and can thus better try to understand what they mean, both in general and in the context of the novel and the specific part that each of them preface. The titles of each of the six parts of the book, together with their epigraphs and the translations that are given in the audiobook, are provided in Appendix D.

As noted before, these epigraphic proverbs are not really provided with any context. However, proverbs are also used within the text of the novel, where the surrounding text functions more specifically as context. Sometimes, like the epigraphic proverbs, they appear in African languages, sometimes they appear in English translation, and sometimes first the original is given, and the translation follows shortly after. In chapter one, on the very first page, the proverb that also functions as the epigraph of the first part is repeated: “Bi oju ri enu a pamo” (James 3). The sentence that follows is the corresponding translation: “Not everything the eye sees should be spoken by the mouth” (3). This also happens with the epigraph of the last part. In chapter twenty-three, the first chapter of that part, Tracker says: “*Mun be kini wuyi a lo bwa*, old man. I brought weeping to the house of death [...]” (545), where the epigraphic proverb is thus repeated and a translation given. The other epigraphs are not repeated within the novel itself. However, at one point the translation of one of the epigraphs is given in the text, namely of the epigraph of the second part. Near the end of chapter 8, which is around the middle of part two, a character says: “Forward is the hyena, backward is a fox” (188). The original is not given in the text and since the translation is not provided with the epigraph, the reader probably does not know that the epigraph comes to the fore here.

Besides the epigraphs, other proverbs also appear in the novel. For instance, the fifth sentence of the first chapter reads: “Truth eats lies just as the crocodile eats the moon” (James 3), which comes across as a translated proverb. Later on, a monster utters a sentence in an African

language, which is then repeated by Tracker, who also provides a translation: “*Ukwau tsu nambu ka takumi ba*. I knew the tongue. *A dead thing does not lack a devourer*” (79). Another example is “*Ko kare da ranar sa*” (302), uttered by a minor character speaking to Sadogo. In this instance, no translation is provided in the text, so that only the context may provide the reader with some idea of what the phrase might mean.

As stated before, the difficulty of these proverbs is that it is really hard to determine for each and every one what language they originate from. Since James himself does not provide clear information on this, perhaps it is not that important to know what exact language is used in each instance. Together, these proverbs reinforce the salience of African influences on the English that is used, simply by their presence and their contrast to the English text that surrounds them. They provide the text with a more authentic feel, since the story takes place in Africa – albeit a fictional version of it. The very fact that it concerns a fictional universe makes the exact origins of the influences on the language and the world that is portrayed less crucial, since James is able to pick and choose what he finds interesting and useful in order to build his own universe. In building his universe, a writer such as J.R.R. Tolkien, in the *Lord of the Rings* series, for instance, also based himself on many different (European) cultures and languages. A difference here is that Tolkien invented his own languages, while James does not necessarily seem to be doing this, but the general idea of finding inspiration in many different cultures and languages remains similar.

Loose Terms

Besides proverbs, many words and terms in African languages can also be found in the novel. These words are usually not italicised and so do not stand out from the main body of the text, other than by their foreign character. Different categories of the kind of words that are given in African languages can be distinguished. There are words that represent things which can be found in African

nature, words that represent aspects of African cultures, or words that refer to certain people or creatures. Such terms, that refer to distinctly “African” concepts, can be considered to be realia, or culture-specific items. Aixelá defines culture-specific items as: “Those textually actualized items whose function and connotations in a source text involve a translation problem in their transference to a target text, whenever this problem is a product of the nonexistence of the referred item or of its different intertextual status in the cultural system of the readers of the target text” (Aixelá 58). In his definition of realia, Grit emphasises the uniqueness of such concepts, specific to a country or culture, so that elsewhere no full equivalent is found (Grit 189). James makes use of such terms relatively often, as shown by the examples provided below.

As mentioned earlier, some words represent the names of certain things that are to be found in African nature, such as plants. An example is “masuku beer” (e.g. James 6), since masuku is a fruit indigenous to regions in Central to Southern Africa. Another example is “iroko tree” (e.g. James 4). This is a tree that is native to the west coast of Africa. The tree is also sacred in some African cultures; the Yoruba for example believe that a spirit lives in the tree and misfortune will come your way if you try to cut the tree down (Ogumefu 17). Chinua Achebe, a celebrated Nigerian author, also refers to the tree in his works and is himself associated with the iroko tree; “the tree of true greatness” (Ene). Besides being typical of certain African landscapes, the tree is thus also an important symbol in certain African cultures.

There are many words that represent aspects of African cultures. For example, many terms are used that are related to certain African rituals. Examples of this are “Hemba masks” (24), “The bumbangi, the official and provider of food [...] mweelu mask of sprouting feathers and a giant hornbill beak [...] the makala, master of charms and spells” (26), and “fetish priest” (29). Early on in the book, James also incorporates an African game in the story, and uses terms related to this game:

He played a game against a binga, a Bawo master [...] Surely you know Bawo, priest; if not I must explain it to you. Four rows of eight holes on the board, each player gets two rows. Thirty and two seeds for each player, but we had fewer than that, I cannot remember how much. Each player puts six seeds in the nyumba hole [...]

“You took the game to mtaji phase,” he said. (James 6-7)

James often does not give a direct translation of the terms and words he uses, but he does sometimes explain what they mean in an indirect way, as can be seen above. If direct translations would be given all the time, this might disturb the reading experience and the pace of the narrative and thereby become tiresome. An indirect explanation or description, however, is less intrusive. Tracker explains a little what the Bawo game is about to the Inquisitor, to whom he tells his story. At the same time, this explanation is of course useful to the reader as well, who probably also has not heard of the game. While some context is now provided, not everything is fully explained. For example, the reader will probably not know what is meant by the “mtaji phase”, besides that it must be some development in the game. James leaves it up to the reader to decide whether they know enough to read on or would like to learn more about, in this case, the game and its rules and terms. In this way he could be said to lightly encourage his reader to learn more about African cultures, by trying to pique their interest.

James also makes use of words that are used to refer to certain people. For example, homosexual men are called “shoga”, which is a Swahili term. He also makes use of the concept of “mingi” children. James lets Kava, one of his characters, explain:

He pointed to each child and told me why their parents chose to kill them or leave them to die. These were lucky that they were just left to be found. Sometimes the elders demand that you make sure the child is dead, and the mother or father drowns the child in the river. [...]

He pointed to the white-skinned girl.

“She is the colour of demons. Mingi.” A boy with a big head tried to grab a firefly.

“His top teeth grew before the bottom. Mingi.” Another boy was already asleep but his right hand kept reaching out and grabbing air.

“His twin starved to death before we could save both. Mingi.” A lame girl hopping to her spot on the floor, her left foot bent in a wrong way.

“Mingi.” Kava waved his hands, not pointing to anyone.

“And some born to women not in wedlock. Remove the mingi, remove the shame. And you may still marry a man with seven cows.” (James 50)

Mingi children are cursed “and must be destroyed. Or else that curse spreads to the mother, the father, the family and brings drought, famine, and plague to the village” (39). The concept of mingi children comes from the Omo Valley in Southwest Ethiopia, where this practice continues to this day in some tribes (“Mingi”).

Another way in which James uses African terms is by the fact that he refers to many mythological creatures from African cultures. Some examples include: abadas, yumboes, the Bultungi, Zogbanu, ghommids, Ewele, Egberere, tokoloshe, Ipundulu, Asanbosam, Sasabonsam, and Adze. Sometimes, these words are the name of a creature both in a broad and narrow sense, as is the case with (the) Ipundulu and (the) Adze for example. The mythological origins of these creatures vary. Abadas are a sort of African unicorn, the word comes from the Kikongo language; Yumboes “are a type of fairies in Wolof mythology”; Bultungi are werehyenas, which in the Kanuri language are “bultungin” (Wilson-Max). Zogbanu is “a 30-horned, forest-dwelling giant in the tradition of the Fon of Benin” (Lynch and Roberts 85). Tokoloshe “is a dwarf-like, mischievous and evil spirit [...] called upon to cause trouble for others” and originates from Southern African mythology, and the Impundulu, or lightning bird, appears in South African mythology (Wilson-Max). James describes his Ipundulu as follows: “White streaks in his hair, long feathers at the back of his head sticking out

like knives and going all the way down his back. White wings, black feathers at the tips and wide as the room. Body white and featherless, thin but muscular. Black bird's feet floating above the clay floor" (461). The Adze is a vampirical being in Ewe mythology that can turn into a firefly ("Adze; Firefly Vampire"). In James's book, it turns into a swarm of bugs. Asanbosam and Sasabonsam are brothers in the book. They are vampiric monsters who hunt together; Asanbosam is "the flesh eater" and Sasabonsam "the bloodsucker", who also has wings (James 81). In Ashanti mythology, they are similar but different monsters, whereby the Sasabonsam indeed has wings. They live in trees and attack passers-by and hunters from above ("Asanbosam and Sasabonsam").

The ghommids Ewele and Egberere have a different origin and James's use of them can be seen as a reference to the translation to the first full-length novel written in Yoruba, D.O. Fagunwa's *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons*. The novel was translated by Wole Soyinka, an important Nigerian writer who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1986, the first African writer to do so. The work can be seen as quite influential since it was not only the first novel written in Yoruba, but also one of the first in any indigenous African language (Wisner). Tychonievich expresses admiration for the way in which Soyinka translated Yoruba terms for many different kinds of creatures. Often, an existing English word would not really suffice, so he made up words that nonetheless had an authentic feel to it. One of those words was "ghommid", which according to Tychonievich is "an umbrella term for those creatures in Yoruba folklore which correspond roughly to our ogres, goblins, elves, and such". In the original Yoruba text, examples of such creatures are "ewele" and "egberere", which in Soyinka's translation have become "dewilds" and "gnoms", respectively (Tychonievich). James has used these two Yoruba terms as the names for two of his creatures, the two ghommids. In his version they appear to be family and thus seem to be similar creatures, although their appearance is described as being different. In this way, James pays homage to an important African work of literature.

There are also words that James puts in an African language, whereby the concept is not necessarily African. That is to say, an English word could semantically just as easily have been used. Such words are thus not really considered to be *realia*. The function of African words here is simply to provide the text with a more African feel and providing local colour. An example is the fact that throughout the novel, several words for vagina seem to be used. The word “koo” is used quite often, as happens here: “blood from a girl’s koo” (155). Another word that is used several times is “kehkeh”, such as in: “nothing can bring love for the woman whose kehkeh I dropped out” (148). There are also some variations that occur just once: “whenever he dips into the wet of his new wife’s wiwi” (23); “And the girl must have the man deep inside her cut out of her neha for her to be a woman [...]” (25); “[...] how you find yourself up the pupu of this future princess?” (123); and “her nana, a sprout of black-haired bush” (177). These terms provide the text with a sense of variety and diversity and draw the reader’s attention because of their foreign quality.

As becomes clear from the examples given above of the way James incorporates African terms and words in the text, he often does not provide a direct translation of the words used. In some cases, this might simply be because the terms represent something inherent to specific African cultures or tradition, for which no words exist in English. The concept of *mingi* might be considered as a clear example of a culture-specific item, or “*reale*” (Grit 189), since the concept is foreign to the Western Anglophone world and no English term exists for it. The inclusion of words in African languages also reinforces and emphasises the “Africanness” of the language that is used as well as of the world that is portrayed. Another reason might be that James does not want to make it too easy for the reader, but encourage them to learn more about African cultures. Furthermore, it can easily disturb the reading experience if the flow of the text is continuously disturbed by providing direct translations of what is already said.

Nonstandard Syntax

Besides the occurrence of African words and phrases in the text, the influence of African languages is also present in the very syntax of the language that is used. In the interview with James by *Audible* mentioned earlier, James states: “I wanted the sort of rhythm and pace and even the sort of vocabulary system of non-English languages, even though I was writing in English” (Danis).

Nonstandard syntax comes especially to the fore in dialogues. Sometimes, the word order is changed. An example of this is the following sentence, which Tracker utters when speaking to Sangoma: “You will have back the boy” (James 69). The word order comes across as odd; normally “the boy”, the direct object in the sentence, and “back” would be reversed. However, this example is not necessarily representative for Tracker’s speech in general, since his speech usually seems to conform more to Standard English rules than the speech of many other characters. Another way in which James diverts from Standard English is by the way numbers are expressed. When characters are counting and numbers exceed ten, instead of let’s say, fourteen, they would say four and ten: “She went missing with five gold rings, ten and two pairs of earrings, twenty and two bracelets, and ten and nine anklets” (James 5). This is similar to how the numerical system of Swahili works: numbers one to nine have their own name, but compound numbers are literally composed by combining numbers, using the word “na”, which means “and” (“Counting in Swahili”).

In the *Audible* interview, James also explains that verbs in some languages are always present tense and that this also “affected the language, because [he] knew [he] was going to write in English, but [he] wanted a very non-English-sounding English, and research helped a lot in that way” (Danis). An example of a language where this is the case, is Wolof, which James states he has researched quite extensively, and which has thus probably had a relatively big influence on his work (Danis). In another interview, James reveals that one of his characters, the moon witch Sogolon, “is almost an English approximation of Wolof, in the sense that verbs are always present tense, and

characters are always singular” (James “Author Event Series” 01:21:25). The characteristic of using verbs in present tense, however, does not only seem to be used by Sogolon, but also by other characters in their speech, although it does not always happen consistently, as can be seen by this phrase uttered by Sangoma: “[...] He jumped the tree and run south” (James 69). Another example, in which the use of the present tense happens more consistently, is delivered by the chief of the Gangatom clan:

“When the flesh eater and the blood drinker brother *take* my sister they *suck* just enough blood to keep her alive but *feed* her so much filth that she *become* their blood slave. She *live* under their tree and *eat* scraps of dead men. She *follow* them across all lands until even they tired of her. She *follow* them into rivers, over walls, into a nest of fire ants. One day Sasabonsam *grab* his brother and *fly* off a cliff, *knowing* she *going follow*.” (91; emphasis mine)

The chief’s sister is already dead, as can be distilled from the last sentence. Nevertheless, the chief uses the present tense for verbs. The reader can figure out that this happened in the past by the context that the sentences provide, not by the form of the verb itself.

Something else that stands out is the fact that the verbs are not changed according to the corresponding personal pronouns that are used; the form of the verb stays the same regardless of whether the subject is “they” or “she”. When “she” is the subject, normally an “s” is fixed behind the root of the verb, but this is not done here, it seems that for any subject the root of the verb is used. This indeed resembles the way that verbs are used in Wolof, since in that language verbs are unchangeable stems without conjugation (Bamba Diop 5). In Wolof, personal pronouns are conjugated instead of verbs (Gutman and Avanzati). James has not gone as far as to introduce this into the English he uses, but this would also change the language in a very drastic way that the reader might not be able to follow, since temporal pronouns are very peculiar to an English audience (as well as for a Dutch audience and many more).

Another aspect that stands out is the omission in the last sentence: “[...] knowing she going follow”, whereby “that”, “is” or “was”, and “to” are omitted. Omission of such grammatical markers occurs more often. Another example is the sentence “I talking to you as man” (James 18), where “am” is omitted, as well as “a” before “man”. Constructions such as these do not carry meaning but serve grammatical purposes. This grammaticality is breached by James on purpose; after all, he claims to want to write in “a very non-English-sounding English”. The choice of words also contributes to an English that does not come across as Standard English. For example, in Standard English, it would be more accepted to write a phrase such as “knowing she going follow” as “knowing she would follow”. Another example is uttered by an old man who lives in the forest: “You think men of bush and river grunt and bark like dogs. That we don’t wipe the ass when we shit. Maybe we rub it on our skin. I talking to you as man” (James 18). The words “men of bush and river” come across as a little strange; a more standard formulation would be “bushmen (and rivermen)” or something more explanatory, like “men who live in the bush and near rivers”. It seems more natural in the next sentence to speak of “our ass” rather than “the ass”, at least in Standard English. Instead of “as man”, a more standard formulation would be “from man to man”. It can thus clearly be seen that James wishes to divert from Standard English and let his characters speak their own version of the language, nourished and complemented by African languages, as can for example be seen by the frequency of using the present tense and roots of verbs.

Non-Standard and Standard English

It has been established that throughout the book Non-Standard English is used much. This happens most often in dialogue. In the narration, Standard English is much more common. The narration is done by Tracker, the main character of the novel. Tracker’s speech is also often in Standard English, at least in an English that is more standard than that of many other characters, such as Sogolon, the

slaver Amadu Kasawura or most of the monsters. In Tracker's words, too, however, both as narrator and when actually speaking, some nonstandard elements can be found. For example, Tracker as the narrator sometimes uses a peculiar way of expressing himself when it comes to describing characteristics of a specific place. Examples include "Near the opening was soft with shrubs" (19), "Behind his hut was not far from the river" (32), "Inside the hut smelled not like cow dung" (238), and "Sun was running from noon, but inside his room dimmed to evening" (251). The subjects in these phrases are adverbial phrases (of place) which seems strange; a grammatically correct Standard English sentence would require a different subject, for example: "Near the opening the ground was soft with shrubs" or "The rear side of his hut was [...]" (or even "His hut was [...]"). As has been shown before, occasionally Tracker uses a slightly different word order than is standard, which also happens here: "But I did not know where lived this boy" (24) and "We passed a small hut where lived a witch" (135). James might make use of alternative word orders to liven up the text, as well as to once again make it seem less English. Moreover, this alternative word order causes end-focus; more importance is placed on who is talked about, a certain boy and a witch, respectively.

Sometimes when Tracker speaks to someone who uses less standard English, his own English becomes less standard as well. An example is when he speaks to Kava, whom he sort of befriends early in the novel: "My mother calls me Kava.' 'Where is she? Where is your father, sister, brothers?' 'Night sickness, they all die'" (32). Tracker does not use the plural form of the verb here, as if he, perhaps unconsciously, copies the way the other person talks. Sometimes he starts mimicking someone's incorrect use of English on purpose, to ridicule the other person: "'Nasty boy, how you deh manage the things?' he asked. 'Deh managing them fine,' I said, mocking his tongue" (270).

Even though James seems to go to fewer extremes in the way that Tracker expresses himself

as opposed to other characters, Tracker's narration and speech are not completely standard either. One of the reasons why James has chosen to let Tracker's phrasing be less unconventional compared to some characters, may be the simple fact that he is the main character of the book and since he also narrates it, the reader is exposed to Tracker's words the most by far. If readers would have to go through highly nonstandard formulations continuously throughout the whole book, they might be put off by the abundance of nonstandard language, since it demands extra attention and could be perceived to disrupt the flow of the story, which in itself is already complex. Then again, the main character of the next book in the trilogy will be Sogolon, whose language usage is much more nonstandard than Tracker's. It will therefore be interesting to see how James will go about the language usage of his next main character and other characters in the sequel of the book.

Idiolects

Many characters appear in the book, some of which only have a small role, and some of which have more major roles. The way these characters express themselves and the kind of language that they use, differs. The English of some characters is more standard than that of others, which can be seen for example by the kind of words they use and the way they structure their sentences. Some characters also have certain phrases or words that they often use, or a specific way of expressing themselves. It is hardly possible to look at every single character's speech in detail, since there are so many. The total number of people who at one point were part of the fellowship hired to find the boy is already twelve, and in their search for the boy they cross paths with many others, people as well as talking monsters. Therefore, certain distinctive aspects of the speech of different characters will be discussed, to point out in what ways the speech of characters differs.

As is discussed before, Tracker's speech does contain some nonstandard elements, but overall, he uses a fairly standard English. A characteristic feature of his speech is that he tends to be

quite coarse in the way he expresses himself, especially when someone angers or annoys him. While he is not the only character to utter the phrase “Fuck the gods”, it is certainly a curse he uses often. It is uttered 59 times in the novel, 41 times by Tracker himself. He often uses quite creative, crude ways to abuse people verbally. Some examples are: “Witch, crone, scar-speckled Gangatom bitch [...]” (49), “That woman can go lick between the ass cheeks of a leper” (62), “The shape-shifting son of a sniveling cat bitch [...]” (80), and “[...] You look like the head of a dog pushing out of the asshole of cat walking backwards” (179). This is characteristic of him, because throughout the novel, people remark that besides him “having a nose”, he also seems to have quite a mouth on him.

Interestingly, both the Leopard and Mossi, like Tracker, seem to speak more or less Standard English, compared to other characters. Both of these characters are quite close to Tracker. Mossi’s speech differentiates itself by its register, which is higher than that of most other characters.

Sometimes he uses words that would be a little too fancy for other characters such as here: “[...] Here evil has no qualm with striking at noon [...]” (357), and “[...] when bloodsuckers or whatever they are manifest [...] Is there no cunning to this?” (420). However, most often it is not necessarily the words he uses, but the way in which he structures his sentences that causes his speech to come across as higher in register, and more elegant: “I have never seen you so dressed” (425), “[...] She had me lie with her” (427), and “There are children of great importance to you. I have thought of such things, of children, but ... well. Why think of flight when one can never be the bird? We are of strange passions in the East [...]” (475-476). He is the only major character who comes from “the land of the eastern light”, probably from an important noble family and when Tracker meets him, he is a prefect in Kongor, quite a high position. He loves to make witty remarks and at times can be almost poetical: “Maybe we should make as if we are fucking like violent sharks, to give them something to listen to. Uncock me at once, with that battering ram of yours! My hole, a chasm now it is!” (419), “I said, Sirs, I am not the one who clipped you both, don’t take your anger out on my

poor little knight” (425). At one point he is literally compared to a poet:

“What do you see at night?”

“Stars. In my lands night is where people do the evil to enemies they call friends in the day. It’s when sihrs and jinns come play, and people scheme and plot. Children grow to fear it because they think there be monsters. They build a whole thing about it, about night and dark and even the colour black, which is not even a colour here. Not here. Here evil has no qualm with striking at noon. But it leaves night beautiful in look and cool of feel.”

“That was almost verse.”

“I am a poet among prefects.” (357)

He also tends to use the archaic forms of verbs, which reinforces the poetic aspect of his speech. He uses the contraction “’tis” quite often, such as in “By my life ’tis as if you’ve always known me” (351), and one time the archaic form “dost” instead of “do”: “Dost you know anyone not mad?” (364). His way of speaking on the one hand seems to underline his noble heritage, on the other hand it also tends to reinforce the humoristic, ironic tone he often adopts.

The Leopard’s speech almost seems to fall in between Tracker’s and Mossi’s. Sometimes he can be crude, like Tracker: “So you either speak through your ass or fart through your mouth [...]” (64). Besides Tracker, only a couple of other characters say the phrase “Fuck the gods”. Mossi says it four times, the Leopard eleven times. Like Tracker, he has no reservations about talking about violence and sex in a rough way: “[...] I beat him to near death until he told me, and then I beat him to near death again when he told me” (492), or “[...] You enjoyed it much when it was I talking about men’s journeys to and from my ass [...]” (502). However, like Mossi, he also often likes to joke and make Tracker laugh: “‘Thousand fucks for your mother.’ ‘A thousand and one if we’re speaking of my mother,’ he said, and laughed” (114). Mossi and the Leopard also both like to spar with Tracker. Mossi tries to dig deeper and make Tracker question his views upon the world,

for example on women:

“[...] But I think of your mother, or rather the mother you told me about who might not even be real, or if she is real, not as you say. You sound like fathers where I am from who blame the daughter for rape, saying, Had you not legs to run away? Had you not lips to scream? You think as they do that suffering from cruelty or escaping it is a matter of choice or means, when it is a matter of power.” (480)

The Leopard and Tracker also sometimes share philosophical discussions and confront each other with statements they have done in the past:

“Leopards do not know of death. They never think of it, because it is nothing to think of. Why do we do this, Tracker? Why do we think of nothing?”

“I don’t know. Because we have to believe in something.”

“A man I knew said he didn’t believe in belief.” He laughed and coughed.

“A man I knew said nobody loves no one.” (618)

The Leopard is a shapeshifter and he often expresses his thoughts on humans and his preference for the beast form: ““There’s no future in your form. Smaller. Slower, weaker”” (64). Although one time he jokes about his language skills (“[...] I skip too much and make the mission—’ ‘Mission, is it? We’re to be priests now?’ ‘I’m a cat, Tracker. How many fucking words do you think I know?’” (115)), he seems to be quite capable of expressing himself accurately.

Another character whose speech is interesting is Sogolon, the moon witch. James has stated that her speech was to be “almost an English approximation of Wolof, in the sense that verbs are always present tense, and characters are always singular” (James “Author Event Series” 01:21:25). She usually uses the roots of verbs, often leaves auxiliary verbs out or uses the root, “be”: ““It be two days now. Where the boy?”” (442). Her language usage is quite far removed from Standard English, and this goes further than the verbs. For example, she often does not change personal

pronouns when they are objective, but uses the subjective form: “[...] Why send we on a mission then stop we from doing it?” (221), or “Too many children in Kongor don’t have an end to they story [...]” (246). She also uses ungrammatical forms like “youself” and “themsself”, as well as a double negative: “[...] Can’t trust no man in Kongor” (246), or “I don’t write none of them [...]” (368). Furthermore, Sogolon can be regarded as a sort of feminist in that she does not accept a man to have power over her and in general, she seems to think quite lowly of men and expresses this fervently: “[...] Cannot make fellowship with men. A man alive is just a man in the way [...]” (229), “[...] Every single one of you a fool. Spend so much time growl, and scowl like hungry hyena, none of you have time to find your own shit, much less a boy. You want to know what Kongor is to me? Kongor is where man teach me him true use. And even the last thing he good for a candlestick do it better” (444). She always seems to know more than the rest of the fellowship and is not inclined to share her knowledge and plans with the rest, whom she often makes out for fools, like in the quote above.

There are also quite some minor characters whose speech is very nonstandard. One extreme example is a Seven Wing mercenary that Tracker meets near a river. Certain words are written in a more phonetical way, such as: “Nasty boy, how you deh manage the things?” (270) and “Dats what we going do with men laka you?” (270). Furthermore, the soldier also uses non-English words: “Me chop off your bolo first, and then your head, then throw the rest of you in the river. How you liking that? And when you parts flow down de river, people going say luku laka pon the boy-fucker shoga rolling down in the river, don’t drink from the river lest you become boyfucker too” (271). Shoga is a swahili term, here used in a derogatory manner, referring to a homosexual man. It becomes clear from the context that “bolo” must refer to male genitals. It might be a word from Tshiluba, a Bantu language that, like Swahili, is one of the official languages in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; it is that language’s word for penis (Dimmendaal 16). It is not exactly clear where the words “luku

laka pon” derive from, but clearly, it is not English, although it might be derived from some form of pidgin English.

Some characters also use certain phrases that they tend to repeat. For example, the slaver repeats the words “tell me true, tell me quick, tell me now”. The elder Belekun the Big likes to use repetitive phrases such as “[...] As it is, as it should be, as it –” (192), and “[...] he must have, yes he did, of course he did [...] Yes they do, of course they do [...]” (194). The queen of Dolingo repeats herself whenever she wishes to elicit a response in her court: “Should I call him sandman?” she said. ‘I shall call him sandman, for I find this a funny thing. ... I did say I find this a funny thing.’” (413), or “[...] Tell me now, since nobody in this court likes when you annoy their Queen. ... I said, nobody in this court like if you annoy the Queen.” (415).

Then there are the speaking monsters. Their English tends to be quite nonstandard as well, which makes sense, because how could a monster living in the wilderness speak Standard English, and why would he bother? The speech of many of the monsters is quite repetitive; they like to repeat words and sentences they have said and use affirmative phrases. Some examples from Asanbosam, a vampiric monster who lives in the woods and feeds on passers-by, are: “Gods send us a fat one, yes he is. A fat one they send us” (79), “[...] Soon soon soon soon soon you begging for it” (80), and “Need his blood yes he do, so he say and he do [...]” (81). There are the ghommids Ewele and Egberé, who repeat their own words, as well as those of each other: “Where he gone? Where he go? Where he went?’ ‘Whowhowho?’ ‘Himhimhim! Look look look!’ ‘Where him gone?’ ‘So I say already, fool.’ ‘Him gone’” (233). There is the white scientist who turned himself into a spider. Tracker thinks he might be one of the Nan Si, the “trickster and storyteller” (583). He denies this, but keeps on repeating his wish for a story: “Take a story and give me, yes? Take a story and give me” (583). In the speech of some monsters, rhythm and rhyme play an important role. This is especially the case in the speech of Ewele and Egberé and the eldest hyenawoman of the Bultungi,

respectively: “[...] Eat we fill and leave them still, and they going spoil and rot and vultures going glut [...]” (232), and “‘Shall we eat it now? Take him in? Limb by limb?’ [...] ‘Come, come no fuss, rend the flesh, juice the blood, eat it, us,’ the old one said. ‘I say we kill him now,’ the young one said. ‘No, no, eat him slow, start with the feet, precious meat,’ the old woman said” (178).

It should be noted that the way in which characters speak does not always seem to be fully consistent. Sogolon for example, sometimes all of a sudden seems to speak in a less nonstandard way: “‘I know I do not have to tell you of the ten and nine doors,’ Sogolon said. ‘That is how we came to Kongor.’ ‘There is one right here.’ ‘Old woman, that is what all old women think about where roads cross. If not a door then some other kind of night magic.’ ‘This look like a night for your foolishness?’” (345). In the last sentence, she uses the root of the verb “look”, which she often does. The first and third sentence are also spoken by Sogolon, but they have no nonstandard quality to them. When looking at other examples of her speech, one might expect her to replace “is” in both sentences with “be”, as she does elsewhere. There does not seem to be an apparent reason why all of a sudden, she sometimes seems to speak in a more standard way; nevertheless, it does happen. Since Sogolon’s speech is normally quite marked, it stands out more easily when this is not the case. It happens more often though that certain characteristics of speech are not always applied consequently, as this earlier quoted sentence by Sangoma showed: “[...] He jumped the tree and run south” (69).

Verse

Another way in which orality plays a role in the book is through the use of verse. Part five of the book consists almost entirely of a song, filling nine pages. The first chapter of the previous part also contains a song. Apart from those two instances, sometimes short bits of verse are also to be found, like the verse that Sadogo recites to a slave girl: “*Bring words to voice and / Meat to this verse / Coal and*

ash / Flicker a flame / Brilliant? (304). Another example are these lines, spoken by the monster Asanbosam: *“I likes the flesh / And bone / Sasa like blood / And seed. He send we you. / Ukwau tsu nambu ka takumi ba”* (79). The two songs are both sung by a griot. The first one is sung by an old man that Sogolon leads the fellowship to, who turns out to be a southern griot. The oriki of part five is sung by a griot who has apparently lived with Tracker and his family when they lived in a monkeybread tree in Mitu.

According to Finnegan, the term griot is used “to refer to almost any kind of poet or musician throughout at least the French-speaking areas of West Africa” and presumably derives from the Fulani word *gaoulo*, meaning wandering poet or praiser, or the Wolof word *gewel*, meaning poet and musician (97). Kaschula cites Jones, Palmer and Jones (1988), stating that a griot is an artist who “was, and still is, observer, commentator or councillor on the past and passing scenes” and “[keeps] the heroic feats of historical figures alive, but also [comments] in traditional style on contemporary matters” (56). The political aspect of the position is also reflected in the book. The first griot is afraid to sing his songs, because many southern griots have been killed by the king, so that the truth about the past does not come out. The second griot has apparently been called upon by the Inquisitor, the man who Tracker tells his story to, who wishes to find out what happened in the search for the boy.

The song of the southern griot seems to be about love lost and loneliness and has a chorus, although each time it is slightly modified, since the subject changes from “I” to “he” to “you”, and where “was looking for” is used in its first line the first two times, the last time this is changed to “want find”. The first two choruses consist of seven lines, the last one of thirteen, since the phrase “You did lose another” is repeated more times here. Both the first and last verse are six lines long, the middle one is divided into two and consists of five lines and then three more. The length of lines of the chorus is quite short, and the length of the lines of the first part of the middle verse differs

quite a lot:

Time make every man a widow

And every woman too

Inside him

Black like him

Black that suck through the hole in the world (397)

There is no rhyme scheme, although the words “lover” and “another”, that are repeated in the chorus, show assonance. In the last verse, the word “yeah” is added to the end of the penultimate line, which strengthens the impression of it being sung, thus giving the verse a more oral character.

Part five is entitled “Here is one oriki”. Iyasere describes oriki as “traditional Yoruba poetic verse” (117). According to Finnegan, oriki stands for “praise names”, which put together resemble “a loosely constructed poem”, praising the individual it is about (112). Awe explains an oriki can be about many things; specific people and gods as well as inanimate objects such as illnesses, lineages or food (332). “[T]he poem depicts the portrait of an object by giving its most salient characteristics in very figurative and hyperbolic language” (Awe 332). Oriki is an important part of Yoruba culture (Awe 331). Beier states that an oriki is no “continuous narrative”, but “consists of a series of proverbial phrases that praise or characterise the respective person” (25). The oriki in the novel, however, does tell a story quite explicitly. First, the griot mostly sings about his observations of the peculiar family and about Tracker and Mossi’s lovemaking, then he tells the story about Tracker going to the Gangatom tribe to belatedly perform the ceremony to become a man, as well as his subsequent realisation that he does not need it, and then Tracker, urged on by Mossi, visits his mother whom he abandoned so long ago. The song starts with the griot introducing himself and calling upon the “Thunder god”. According to Beier, many oriki have been composed about the thunder god Shango (25). He is an important orisha, a deity within the Yoruba culture, who is

associated, among other things, with anger and axes (Scranton), two concepts that are most relevant to Tracker's character as well. The song ends by the griot leaving the family to continue wandering and in the very last line it becomes clear that the Leopard came to visit: "*A black Leopard come to the tree*" (532). This makes for quite a mysterious ending, since the reason of the visit or its effect is not revealed. The abrupt ending furthermore seems ominous. Tracker might have caused the griot to stop so abruptly. Even though the griot seems to have come near the end of his song, by singing about leaving, Tracker calls for him to stop and seems unable to bear listening to what the griot has to say any longer: "Stop him. Stop him now. Stop him or I will find a way to end everything this very night. And then you will know nothing about how anything ended" (532).¹

Like the other griot's song, the oriki seems to be in free verse. There are some elements that rhyme or show assonance, but there is no fixed rhyme scheme. An example of rhyme is found in this line: "*not like any man in Weme Witu, Omororo, or even Mitu*" (524). Assonance occurs sometimes between the last words of consecutive lines: "*laughing, screaming, fighting, making gods hush / and there up top lie a man on a rug*" (524), or between consecutive words: "*For Tracker stagger ten times*" (531). Alliteration is also to be found, such as here: "[...] *baamba he have hair like a horse*" (524). While such techniques are thus clearly used in the song, they are not used in abundance. The length of the lines differs greatly. There is no chorus like in the other song, but phrases, as well as their structure, are often repeated. For example, in a verse about the preparation for the rite of passage, the phrase "*as be the custom, the men say*" is repeated three times. In the subsequent verse, the three lines "*Kick the knife, and we will kill you / Run from the knife / And we disown you*" are repeated almost exactly.

¹ Later it becomes clear that the Leopard coming to his family's tree was a pivotal moment in Tracker's life, with horrific consequences, since the Leopard persuades Tracker to leave on a quest and in his absence, Mossi and their adopted mingi children are slaughtered by the monster Sasabonsam.

Continuously it is stressed that a story is told by the addition of elements such as “he say”, “I was there, I see it”, “Hear me now” and “Listen to me now”. The repetition of elements furthermore stresses the oral character of the text, since both in songs and when people tell stories, things often tend to be repeated; repetition makes it easier for the audience to understand and remember what is going on.

Sogunra has written about Yoruba oriki written in English. She points out that while English is a stress-timed language, Yoruba is syllable-timed; in English, rhythm is determined by the alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables, while in Yoruba and Nigerian English it is determined by strong syllables or beats (20-21). More unstressed syllables in a phrase speed up the rhythm, while many stressed syllables slow it down and make it more pronounced. According to Sogunra, “The system of beats regards any foot ending with a stress as a rising beat and any foot ending without stress as a falling beat” (21). She claims that a rising beat corresponds with “the Yoruba syllable structure and intonation pattern which characteristically ends on a rising note” (21). In the novel’s oriki, it is not really useful to speak of feet, since it is free verse. It does not necessarily seem to be the case that most lines end on stressed syllables, which would correspond with a rising beat. Lines end both with stressed and unstressed syllables, and sometimes sentences run on to the next line, such as here: “*I hear children / laughing, screaming, fighting, making gods bush*” (524).

Chapter Three:

Translation-Oriented Text Analysis and Translation Strategies

In the previous chapter, the source text was analysed, whereby the focus was put on different aspects of orality that come to the fore in the novel's language. In the current chapter, the focus lies more specifically on the fragments that are to be translated, in which the aspects that have been discussed in chapter two manifest themselves. The analysis of this chapter is translation-oriented, so the translation difficulties of the discussed characteristics of the novel are explored, and consequently, possible translation strategies are discussed. Some more general translation issues will also be discussed. Finally, the preferred translation strategies are specified.

Terms and Phrases

Different African languages can be found throughout the novel, whereby sometimes just one word is used, sometimes a whole phrase. Often, the meaning of these semantic units becomes clear either by the context in which they are used, or by an (indirect) translation that follows. Sometimes, in books that contain words and/or phrases in another language that many readers probably will not understand, a glossary is added. This is for example the case for Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe 147-148). *Black Leopard, Red Wolf* does not have a glossary. When translating parts where semantic units in African languages are present, the question arises whether the translator should follow the source text where a translation of such African language-elements is provided, or whether the translator should consider for each instance whether the reader is in need of further explanation. Another matter then arises, namely: is it necessary for the translator to be able to understand all of the semantic units in differing African languages and give his or her own translation of these elements?

In principle, within the world of literary translation, it is frowned upon to make an indirect translation of a work via another language (e.g. Ringmar 2, Lee 72-73). Nonetheless, this is what would happen, albeit on a relatively small scale, if the translator is not proficient in the African languages that are used in the novel, and is thus forced to rely upon the English translations that James sometimes provides for such phrases. What complicates the situation further is that it is not stated anywhere which languages are used exactly, let alone which language is used in what instance. This makes it quite hard for the translator to be able to translate all these African language semantic units. It is not likely that a translator can be found who is proficient in so many different African languages, that he or she is able to identify all the languages that are used and also translate each unit accurately. Of course, doing research and being able to reach out to people who might be of help, for example people who are proficient in relevant languages, can be very useful, but this is a time-consuming endeavour and besides, it will only get one so far as long as it is not clear which languages are used exactly. Indeed, there are not really any clear indicators of which languages are used, besides some offhand remarks that James gives in interviews. It might be a useful option to contact the author himself, but there is no guarantee that this will indeed be possible and if so, that the author is able to pinpoint what languages are used where. James has stated himself that he has used many different African languages and cultures for inspiration (Danis) and has done extensive research (Price), so it might prove difficult to access the information that is needed.²

² Since I thought it would be interesting to find out more about which languages are used in the novel, I have done quite some research, by trying to contact James himself and by reaching out to people speaking African languages. However, it has indeed proved to be a very difficult and time-consuming task. For many phrases, I have not been able to find the source language. The research and relevant findings are discussed in Appendix E.

It has thus been established that it might be hard to find a translator who is indeed able to understand and translate all these African language semantic units. Clearly, it is beneficial to be able to do this, so as to be able to fully immerse oneself in the world that is built in the novel, and understand the full meaning of what characters are saying to each other. However, the question is whether it is an absolute necessity to be able to translate the African language elements in order to deliver a decent translation of the novel. James does not seem to expect the reader to know what is said exactly every time he uses African languages within the text. After all, he has incorporated many different languages and has not included a glossary. The words and phrases provide some “local” – African – colour, hereby helping to create the novel’s world as well as making the text more vibrant and intriguing, precisely because of its exotic character. The translator could decide to follow James’s lead in how the African language units are dealt with. Many of the English readers of the novel will have just as little knowledge of the African languages that are used as the Dutch readers have. Furthermore, as said before, James often does not completely leave the reader in the dark, but provides some type of clue in the surrounding text, so that the reader knows what is going on.

To give an example from the fragments that will be translated, in the first fragment, Asanbosam utters a phrase in an African language: “*Ukwau tsu nambu ka takumi ba*” (James 79). Some sentences after this, Tracker as narrator states: “*Ukwau tsu nambu ka takumi ba. I knew the tongue. A dead thing does not lack a devourer*” (79). A translation is thus provided in English. Although it might be interesting to be able to translate the African language semantic unit directly, it is perfectly acceptable to translate James’s translation into Dutch, even though technically this is indirect translation. Besides the fact that it might be quite difficult to even find out from which African language the phrase originates, it is in any case more relevant which meaning James attributes to the utterance in this specific context. He uses such phrases to give the text a more “African” feel, which, together with the way in which the phrase is used in the text, might be more important than what

the phrase may mean exactly. Furthermore, James's translation would appear to be a fairly straightforward translation of the original, since it is not an existing English proverb. Because of this, the phrase carries a mysterious tone even in its translated form. This mysterious aspect could then still be incorporated in the Dutch version of the phrase. Finding a Dutch equivalent for the proverb might give the reader a better sense of what it means, but it would take away the mystery and the exotic aspect of the utterance, and even some of the reader's involvement, since the reader does not have to come up with their own ideas about what it might mean.

When looking at the Dutch translation of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the translator seems to have used a similar strategy, in basing the information the target reader needs on the information that is already provided in the source text, and using the English translations of Igbo elements to formulate the Dutch translations. No extra information is provided in order to help the reader understand what certain exclamations, greetings, or ceremonial phrases mean exactly. Both in the original work and in the translation, a glossary of terms is added, although not all the Igbo terms and phrases that are used can be found here. It is mostly phrases such as mentioned above – ceremonial phrases or greetings – that are not included. The glossary of the translation lists no more terms and phrases than that of the original and the provided translations also seems to be translations of the English translations and explanations of the original. To give an example, *egwugu* in the original is explained in the following manner: “[A] masquerader who impersonates one of the ancestral spirits of the village” (Achebe 147), and in the translation as: “[G]emaskerde man, die een van de voorvaderlijke geesten van het dorp personifieert” (Dicker 174). It occurs once in the book that both an Igbo phrase and its translation are directly provided, when a cow that has broken loose is described. The original reads: “*Oji odu achu ijiji-o-o!* (*The one that uses its tail to drive his flies away!*)” (Achebe 80), and the translation reads: “*Oji odu achu ijiji-o-o!* (*Zij die haar staart gebruikt om vliegen te verjagen!*)” (Dicker 96). From these examples, it follows that the translator has provided a

translation of the English translation or explanation given in the source text, rather than coming up with his own translation of the Igbo word or phrase, and has thus deemed this a valid strategy.

When looking more specifically at loose words and terms in African languages, it has been established that many, or even most, of those used in the novel can be seen as *realia*, or culture-specific items. Both Grit and Aixelá come up with translation strategies for such elements, in which some overlap can be found. The strategy which both researchers provide first and which is the most conserving, keeping closest to the source text, is copying the word used in the source text to the target text. Grit states that in literary texts, this strategy is often used to provide some “*couleur locale*” (192), while Aixelá points out that, paradoxically, this “*respectful strategy*” changes the effect the element has on readers, since it is “*more alien*” to the target language reader than to the source language reader (61). However, in the case of translating this novel, a double layer of translation can be identified. In fact, James has already chosen a strategy by choosing to render such elements in their original African language, rather than using an English term, for example. As Grit notes, this indeed helps to provide local colour. In translating the novel into Dutch, reproducing the African language terms in the translation does not change the effect they have on readers in the way that Aixelá states; in this case these elements are already “*alien*” in the source text for (most) source language readers and this will continue to be the case in the target text and for target language readers.

Nonstandard Language

As we have seen, nonstandard syntax is used varyingly throughout the book, and more by some characters than by others. The use of dialect and nonstandard language in literature leads to very complex translation problems; Berthele even states that it might be “*one of the most difficult tasks for a literary translator to find target-language equivalents for dialectal or sociolectal speech in the*

source text” (588). According to Bandia, translating African literature in non-African languages is actually a double process, since the writer has first expressed “African thought in a European language” and the translator then transfers this “African thought from one European language to another” (61). “The primary level of translation results in an African variety of European languages, and the translator’s task is to deal with the unique problems posed by this so-called non-standard language” (Bandia 61). Such nonstandard language is thus arguably even more complex than a specific dialect, for example, since it is not necessarily an actually existent language variant. This is also the case in the novel, since James explains that the speech is sometimes influenced by African languages such as Wolof, even though it is rendered in English (James “Author Event Series” 01:21:25).

Bandia argues that a translation of an African work should be source text-oriented and that the target language should be moulded and modified so that it can properly convey the “Africanness” of the language that is used (58; 61). He suggests three techniques that can be used in achieving this: calques, semantic shifts and collocational shifts. Calques are defined as “almost literal translation[s] of native words and expressions into European languages”, which can also include sayings (Bandia 64). Semantic shifts occur “when known lexical items in the target language are assigned [new] features of meaning from the source language” (67). Collocational shifts involve creating collocations “without regard for collocational rules such as selectional restrictions or co-occurrence”, or whereby new meaning is assigned to the forms, and also include changes in the syntax “in order to reflect the syntax of [an African] language” (70). Especially calques and collocational shifts can be recognised in the source text and will thus have to be maintained in the target text in order to maintain the novel’s “Africanness”, whereby the target language will likely have to be “bended” so as to achieve this. The question then arises how the language can be bended in order to reflect the nonstandard “Africanised” syntax.

Berthele provides nine categories which can be used in order to render nonstandard speech in translation. Five of these categories consist of orthographic features, four are features that are above the level of spelling. James does not seem to make that much use of divergent spelling of words, but rather plays more with the syntax, which is why the second set of categories might be more relevant here. Of these, two seem especially relevant, namely morpho-syntactic features and syntactic features. Berthele gives the following examples of such features: “[V]iolations of number and gender congruence, wrong case markers [inflection], infinitive language, wrong word order and missing articles” (604). Indeed, many of these examples are used by James himself in creating the nonstandard syntax. However, Berthele argues that in German, these are exactly the techniques that are likely to devalue a character’s speech and brand him “as being ‘other’ as well as deficient” (603-604). This is of course not the effect that the language is desired to have, at least in most cases. Sogolon’s speech often has a nonstandard syntax, but she is not a dumb or uneducated character, quite the opposite, she is in fact rather sly. It is true that many of the characters who make more use of nonstandard syntax are not people that are high in Tracker’s regard; think of monsters, Sogolon, or minor characters that he despises, such as the young witch and the babyseller in the Malangika, the witches market. However, there are also characters whom Tracker respects, or at least not despises, who speak in a nonstandard way, such as the slaver’s date-feeder Bibi or the old southern griot. The nonstandard way in which characters speak should thus not inherently carry very strong negative associations.

It is very important to keep this in mind, because the nonstandard speech of characters is not supposed to ridicule them, but rather differentiate them, adding a more personal touch as well as ingraining a sense of “Africanness” in the very words they use and the way they speak. Discussions about what is, is not, or should be politically correct have become increasingly heated in the Netherlands, which in the world of literary translation can for example be seen by the discussion

sparked by Harm Damsa's 2018 translation of James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*, in which translator and publisher could not come to an agreement about how to translate terms such as "negro", "nigger" and "white" (see e.g. Jaeger and Varsseveld). It is therefore very important to take care in, and be conscious about, the way one reflects the source text, so as not to give rise to any justified accusations of being offensive or upholding stereotypes, especially regarding matters such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and religion. When trying to come up with a way to reflect the nonstandard language usage in Dutch, there are many pitfalls that should be avoided. To name a few examples, the nonstandard language should not come across as stereotypical, make characters sound uneducated, or make them sound odd and therefore hard to relate to. Although in reality it might be really hard, nigh impossible, to come up with a way to reflect the nonstandard language usage in Dutch, while not portraying it in a manner that anyone might find objectionable, being aware of relevant pitfalls is very important, so that one can at least try to avoid them as much as possible.

Another strategy, which would avoid possible indignation about the way in which the nonstandard, "African" nature of the speech of certain characters is expressed in the Dutch translation, might then be considered: the language usage of characters may be normalised. The problem of how to accurately render the nonstandard character of the language usage of characters into Dutch could be evaded, by letting the characters speak in a more standardised way. Indeed, standardising "dialectal traits" happens quite often in translation (Alvstad). However, this would be detrimental to the overall impression of the novel, since nonstandard speech is used very frequently throughout the novel, makes the language more diverse, and also helps in distinguishing the speech of different characters. Ramos Pinto points out that if "non-standard speech plays a central role in the plot [this makes] it difficult not to translate it into non-standard speech", in contrast with situations "where the non-standard speech only appears in the speech of secondary characters [where] normalisation need not compromise the logic of the plot" (293). The nonstandard way in

which characters speak furthermore adds to the idea that while the novel is written in English, the characters in it are African and express themselves in unique ways. The translation might then also be critiqued precisely by not reflecting the novel's "Africanness" enough and thereby doing it an injustice. Completely naturalising the language thus does not seem to be a serious option, since it would cause the language used in the novel to be much flatter and more uniform, and therefore less striking. A way should thus be found to reflect the nonstandard character of speech in the Dutch translation. While avoiding normalisation on a great scale, it might sometimes be considered to portray nonstandard language in a lesser degree or more subtle way, to find a balance between reflecting this important aspect of the novel without doing so in such an extreme way that might aggravate readers or challenge them too much.

Ramos Pinto also formulates different strategies for translating nonstandard language, which she places on "a continuum from a more to a less normalized discourse" (294). Two less normalised strategies are using features (lexical, morpho-syntactic, graphic or phonetic) of either different varieties or of one specific variety (Ramos Pinto 295). Another strategy, which involves using features that are not familiar to the target audience, is the "development of a 'virtual dialect'" (296). In general, it is difficult to select one specific language variety that could function as an adequate equivalent when a specific nonstandard language variety is used in the source text. In this novel, the nonstandard language usage, as stated, is not really of an existing language variety. Therefore, it does not seem logical to choose an existing language variety to be used consistently. Since the variety used in the source text is not necessarily actually to be found in the world, this does not have to be the case for the nonstandard language usage in the target text either. This provides some translational freedom, whereby existent nonstandard varieties might be used to draw from in order to create a nonstandard variety that does not really exist and is thus not really bound to a very specific place, but nonetheless has an authentic feel. Although it might provide freedom to come up with a non-

existing variety, this hardly makes the translation process easier, since it is quite challenging to walk the line between coming across as authentic and at the same time not reminding too much of specific existing varieties, while also avoiding to offend by coming across as stereotypical, for example.

Gloria and Herman Wekker, two Afro-Surinamese researchers, argue that Surinamese Dutch might serve as an adequate equivalent when translating Black American Vernacular (BEV) (2). This language variety comes across as nonstandard for speakers of General Dutch, and furthermore, it is a Dutch variety that has strong African influences, manifested, among other things, by the influence of Sranan, an English-based Creole language (Wekker and Wekker 6). They claim that the language and its people have kept close roots with Africa, for example by the fact that during colonial times, new slaves were constantly brought in from Africa, so that the ties to the mother continent were kept close, and since “Blacks were not allowed to speak Dutch until 1877 [...] [t]hey were locked in in their own cultural and linguistic universe” (14). Because of its African influences and nonstandard character, Surinamese Dutch might thus be a relevant language variety to draw inspiration from.

Wekker and Wekker name some characteristics of Surinamese Dutch. While double negation is a common phenomenon in BEV, and is also used in the novel sometimes, for example by Sogolon, in Dutch it is rare. However, they name “cases such as *nooit nie(t)* and *niemand nie(t)*”, and state that reduplications are quite common, whereby a word is repeated in order to provide more emphasis, positively or negatively, such as in: “Is beter je zegt ’t niemand niemand anders dan God” (3) or “for many many years” (6). Other typical morpho-syntactic features are clippings and abbreviations, possessives without the *-s* suffix, the PRO-drop phenomenon, the cleft-sentence construction and the frequent use of “gaan” to mark the future (6). The PRO-drop phenomenon “involves the omission of subject personal pronouns”, such as in “Is geen nek! Is keel moet Ouma-Tant’ Lien zeggen!” (6). In a cleft-sentence construction, a single message is divided into two clauses

(“Cleft Sentences”). As an example for the cleft-sentence construction is given: “Is ik kom je storen” (Wekker and Wekker 6). The researchers furthermore name some Creole features that BEV and Surinamese Dutch share, those being “the occasional absence of copula *be* and of possessive –’s, the occurrence of PRO-drop, ordinary word order in questions, omission of the subordinator, use of the resumptive pronoun, use of the cleft construction, and avoidance of passives and reflexives” (11).

Wekker and Wekker draw some examples from the work *Kollektieve schuld* by Edgar Cairo, a Surinamese author. Wim Rutgers writes about Dutch Caribbean literature and also refers to Cairo, stating that “[n]o one has explored the possibilities and impossibilities of Surinamese-Dutch better than Edgar Cairo” (546). He quotes Cairo from a collection of essays, who states that Surinamese Dutch consists largely of “purely literal translations from Sranan”, so that in effect its speaker “speaks one language with the grammar of the other” (Rutgers 546). This is exactly what James is doing in the novel, further exemplifying the potential of Surinamese Dutch as a source of inspiration for its translation. *Kollektieve schuld* can be found in the *Digitale bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse Letteren* (dbnl) and the work itself can thus be looked at for further inspiration.

What stands out is that Cairo frequently makes use of orthographic features that strengthen the nonstandard character of the language that is used. An example is that he often changes the voiced consonant “v” at the start of a word into the voiceless “f”, such as here: “Een tante fan d’r zong” (Cairo 12). This also happens sometimes with other consonants; occasionally a “z” becomes an “s” or a “g” a “k”: “We sulle zien!” (12), “Eerstdaags geef ik dat beest rattekif!” (14). The ending of words is often omitted, whereby sometimes an apostrophe is placed. Some examples of such words are: “fo” (voor), “nie” (niet), “na” (naar), “ma” (maar), “gekome” (gekomen) and “la me” (laat me). Occasionally, he also spells longer words in a nonstandard way that gives an indication of how the word is pronounced: “waarskouw” (waarschuw), “percies” (precies), “defenetief” (definitief). He also employs lexical strategies to invoke the nonstandard character, by sometimes

using different words than might be expected; another word might fit better or the word used is even incorrect in standard Dutch: “Je maak percies als die families van je vaderskant!” (use of the verb “maken” (make) to convey the meaning of “doen” (do)) (14), “Vijfenvijftig jaar heb ik!” (in standard Dutch you do not use the verb “hebben” (have), but “zijn” (are) to indicate your age) (12), “Wanneer ze alle schuld van hunzelf hebben afgewassen blijft het fo jou!” (“schuld afwassen” is not a customary collocation in standard Dutch) (13).

Nonstandard elements can also be found in the syntax that is used. “Die” (that), a pronoun, is used relatively often where normally the article “de” (the) would be used: “Koba stuurde die jongste zoon van d’r naar die gaanderij” (11). The PRO-drop phenomenon and cleft-sentence construction mentioned by Wekker and Wekker also often make for a nonstandard syntax: “Is mij jaag je weg?” (13), “Is grap maak je met me!” (24), “Ma’ is niet zo bedoel ik ’t!” (24). Normally, when the word “dat” (that) is used, the phrase that follows has a different word order than a normal sentence would, whereby the verb is placed more to the back. Here, after the word “dat” the words are ordered as if it would be a normal, full sentence, causing the syntax to be nonstandard: “Tante weet zelf dat er is geen werk fo ze” (12), “Meisje vergeet nie dat ik ben je tante!” (12). Articles are often left out: “Ik weet tante, ik weet!” (16).

Wekker and Wekker state that the phonology of Surinamese Dutch is typified by “various types of elision, contraction, assimilation and devoicing” (6). This already came to the fore in the fact that Cairo devoices certain consonants and omits the end-sounds of words. Sometimes he also connects words, such as here: “Z’is dik geworde” (12), “Me kind, ik kan niemeer” (16), “Dan zeg je wat leuke woordjes d’rbij fo die beebie” (17). Cairo also sometimes makes use of certain affirmative words at the end of sentences that provide emphasis: “Ma’ laat me d’r buiten, no?” (13), “Mooi no?” (17), “dat die Moeder van 't erf dat kindje tegen Kwaaiie Dinges gaat beschermen toch!” (17).

It is important to note that the elements that contribute to the nonstandard character of the

language are not used consistently; for many of them, the standard way of writing or constructing a sentence is also used. Again, a parallel with the novel can be seen, since James also does not always use elements of nonstandard speech consistently throughout a character's speech. In the translation, it will therefore also not be necessary to apply nonstandard elements in a very systematic, constant way, but it is possible to vary the ways in which sentences are structured. It is clear that besides making use of nonstandard syntax, Cairo also uses orthographic ways in order to typify the language of his characters. James barely makes use of such features and it might therefore be hard to justify using it on a great scale in translating this novel. However, it might be possible to make use of it sometimes, to strengthen the nonstandard character of the speech of a character, especially in a situation where there might be fewer opportunities in the syntax. A nonstandard element might then be added in another way, so that the overall effect of nonstandard language usage is retained.

As stated before, the degree in which characters speak in a nonstandard way differs, between characters, and also in some degree between utterances within a character's own speech. The latter means that the nonstandard quality of a character's speech does not always have to be equally prominent, since this also varies in the source text. Some sentences provide better opportunities to implement nonstandard elements than other sentences. It can also be the case that strategies are not always implemented consistently, because the nonstandard aspect of speech should not become too overbearing. In the chosen fragments, the characters with the most nonstandard speech are Sogolon and the monsters: Asanbosam, and Ewele and Egberé. Tracker, as well as Mossi, the Leopard and the Aesi, speak in a much more standard way, only occasionally employing phrasings that might be considered nonstandard. Therefore, it seems straightforward that they will also use more standard language in the Dutch translation.

Idiolects

It is also important in the translation still to distinguish the speech of different characters from each other. The novel contains a vast amount of dialogue and, probably to avoid tedious repetition, James does not always indicate who says what, so that the reader must work this out by themselves. If characters all speak in a similar manner, this is of course much harder. In the fragments that will be translated, several characters speak. In the first fragment, Tracker comes upon the monster Asanbosam. In this fragment, there is not so much dialogue going on, but rather a monologue by Asanbosam, since Tracker does not really speak back. In the second fragment, the monsters Ewele and Egberere speak to each other, and later Tracker speaks to one of them. They are described individually, but even in the source text, when they speak to each other, it is not really clear who says what, although one of them seems to be more of a leader. They are quite a comic duo, and one of them keeps insulting the other one. The third fragment consists mostly of dialogue, in which Sogolon speaks the most, and tells a story near the end. The other characters who speak are Tracker and Mossi. An example of it being unclear who speaks exactly can be found in this fragment, since someone asks Sogolon something when she states the land is cursed, without it being stated who is speaking: ““But all the griots’ songs sing of winning wars and conquering new lands. When exactly did a curse happen?”” (James 369). Mossi sometimes speaks in a witty way or in a slightly higher register, but this does not come to the fore in every single sentence he utters, so that in principle, either of them could be the one saying the sentence. In the last fragment, Tracker and the Leopard speak with each other, and Sogolon also says a few sentences at the start.

Aspects that are characteristic of Asanbosam’s speech and should thus preferably be retained in the translation, are the nonstandard syntax, and the frequent repetitions and self-affirmations. He is described as having a foul voice that sounds “like a stench”, and uses sibilants relatively often, so that the reader can easily picture him hissing in a monstrous voice: “[...] I likes the flesh. Yes, the

flesh”; “[...] Tell we true, delicious, delicious”; “[...] Soon soon soon soon soon you begging for it”; “No fresh flesh in days” (James 78-81). In the translation, “s”-sounds may not be used in all the cases where they are used in the source text. However, it should be kept in mind while translating, so that where possible such sounds may be used, to convey the hissing, monstrous quality of Asanbosam’s voice. In the source text, some readers might even see some parallels in Asanbosam’s speech and that of Tolkien’s Gollum. Gollum also speaks of himself in plural, uses many “s”-sounds, sometimes even adding them to words, so that “eggs”, for example, becomes “eggse” (Tolkien 87), and tends to affirm his own statements. Asanbosam’s words “delicious, delicious”, with which he addresses Tracker, seem to echo Gollum’s well-known words “my precious”, with which he indicates his most cherished possession. If possible, it would be interesting to retain this potential reference in the translation, but this might prove difficult, since in the Dutch translation by Max Schuchart, Gollum’s words are translated as “mijn lieveling”, which has no “s”-sounds, and furthermore, “lieveling” is a peculiar word that is hard to allude to.

The speech of Ewele and Egberé is also characterised by its nonstandard syntax and frequent repetition, whereby words and phrases are often repeated twice in a row. Furthermore, it is quite rhythmic; sometimes they make statements that rhyme and because their speech quickly alternates between one and the other, there is a frantic quality to it. In the translation, it is not absolutely necessary to retain the rhyme in the same places if that comes across as too forged, but since it characterises their speech, some rhyme should preferably be included. In their second bit of dialogue, their statements should alternate quickly, as in the source text, to retain the rhythm; therefore, the sentences should not be made too long.

In the third fragment, the contrast between Sogolon’s nonstandard speech and Tracker’s and Mossi’s standard speech is quite substantial, so this should also be visible in the translation. Furthermore, Tracker utters the phrase “fuck the gods” here, which, as shown before, is a curse he

uses often, and whose translation should thus sound like an authentic curse. At the start of the fragment, Mossi's speech is characterised by his light-hearted humour and his slightly fancy manner of speaking: "No laughter to you people below the desert. So, who is this boy you seek? Who presently has him? And how shall he be found?" (James 367). His slightly more elevated manner of speaking should be conveyed in the translation, by using words and sentence structures that are a little less common, but eloquent.

In the last fragment, the few lines by Sogolon are again characterised by their nonstandard syntax. The way in which the Leopard and Tracker speak does not necessarily differ much, but by the context it becomes clear who speaks when. They both do not speak in a very crude way, like they sometimes tend to elsewhere. This difference should be clear in the translation as well, since it reflects the tender moment they share. They also repeat two phrases they used to say, and whose translation should thus reflect this and come across as something they have said many times before.

Characters whose speech is characterised by its nonstandard quality are Sogolon and the monsters. However, it might be relevant to make a distinction here. For the monsters, the nonstandard character of their speech might serve two purposes. There is the fact that it makes their speech seem "less English" (or, in the translation, "less Dutch"), since James aimed to write a novel that is shaped by African influences, both in form and content. At the same time, certain nonstandard elements of their speech may serve another purpose. They are, after all, monsters, and even though they can speak, this does not mean that they express themselves very well. They are not the most intelligent creatures and this sometimes shines through in the way they speak. Therefore, their speech does not always seem grammatically correct, not only because they speak a nonstandard variety, but also simply because they do not have a full command of the language. For Sogolon, the nonstandard quality of her speech is not meant to reflect her being unintelligent or uneducated, for example. She is definitely a smart character who does not like to simply share all her knowledge with

the world, but forges her own path and uses others for “higher purposes”. While she is far from being flawless, especially as perceived by Tracker, the nonstandard way in which she speaks should not make her come across as stupid or impact the way the reader perceives her in some other negative way.

The danger of coming across as politically incorrect in some way has been touched upon before. This danger is greater in the portrayal of a character that is human, than is the case in characters that are monsters, since readers will be less likely to relate to them and care about the way in which they are made to come across. Therefore, special care should be taken in the translation of nonstandard elements where human characters are concerned. Since it is such a prominent characteristic of her speech, Sogolon’s language usage should also come across as nonstandard in the translation, but the main effect of it should be that she speaks a certain language variety, not that she is not capable of expressing herself well. Therefore, it might be more important to resort to specific ways to render the nonstandard character of her speech, compared to the speech of the monsters. This does not mean that there can be no variation in her speech; this also happens in the source text and in Cairo’s rendering of a specific language variety, after all.

Verse

The verse in the source text and more specifically in this case, the oriki, does not really seem to comply to strict rules. In general, there is not much rhyme, definitely not according to a scheme, and the length of lines and number of syllables per line also differs greatly. One of the clearest indicators that it is verse, is because it is made clear that it is sung, and because of its typography; the text is italicised and not the full space of the page is used, but sentences are spread out over several lines. In the last verse, which is the one that will be translated, the griot sings the words “Hear me now” and “Listen to me now”, which also emphasise the text’s oral character.

In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* as well as in *Arrow of God*, some songs are also to be found. Usually, these are quite short, two to four lines, but a few times longer songs also occur. They are often in English, sometimes in Igbo, and sometimes some Igbo words are used, while the rest is in English. Like in James's oriki, in these songs, rhyme is not such an important element, while repetition is. McCarthy also notes that Achebe makes much use of repetition, and points to the fact that this is an important aspect of oral narrative (246). Frequently, the songs take shape as a sort of exchange; first there is an exclamation or question, then a response. The response is often typographically indicated by an indentation. An example from *Things Fall Apart* is:

‘Who will wrestle for our village?

Okafo will wrestle for our village.

Has he thrown a hundred men?

He has thrown four hundred men.

Has he thrown a hundred Cats?

He has thrown four hundred Cats.

Then send him word to fight for us.’ (Achebe 38)

The novels have been translated by different people; *Things Fall Apart* by Jan Dicker/Vertaalgroep Bergeyk and *Arrow of God* by Robert Dorsman. In both works, the translators do not seem to have been overly preoccupied with the length of lines, which often become longer in the Dutch versions. A clear example is the song that is sung by a solitary singer near the end of *Arrow of God*, where lines often become much longer in the Dutch version, such as the first line: “I was born when lizards were in ones and twos” (Chinua 505) that becomes: “Ik ben geboren toen hagedissen alleen of met z’n tweeën waren” (Dorsman 273). Enjambment is also used in the song, which the translator also does, although sometimes in a slightly different way, because of differences in word order between English and Dutch:

But of late	Maar de laatste tijd
A strange bell	Luidt een
Has been ringing a song of desolation	Vreemde bel
(Achebe 505)	Een lied van vernietiging (Dorsman 273)

Neither translator seems to have recognised strict rules to which the songs should adhere, rather, they seem to have prioritised the story that is told, sometimes causing lines to be quite a bit longer in the translation.

The oriki, as noted before, also does not seem to adhere to strict rules. However, the variety of line lengths is quite distinctive and causes the rhythm to change constantly, which might reflect ever-changing rhythms of oral narrative, that keep up suspense. Tedlock states that in oral discourse, pauses may not occur in places where you might expect them, and occur in places where you do not, so that “pauses are used to create suspense” (715). While a new line does not necessarily indicate a pause, the lines’s differing lengths do have an effect on rhythm; longer lines will tend to have a faster pace, while shorter ones have a slower pace and are more emphasised in this way. Therefore, this diversity should be retained in the translation, by keeping short lines relatively short, so that their length indeed notably differs with those of the longer lines. In the last verse of the oriki, there is not as much repetition as in other verses. However, the line “Listen to me now” echoes the earlier “Hear me now”, which should also be the case in the translation, since repetition is an important instrument used in oral narratives.

General Issues

The word “you” can be translated in two ways in Dutch, namely as “je” or “jij”, and as “u”. The latter is more formal. Although each instance should be looked at separately, in general it seems more natural in this novel to translate “you” with the less formal version and use “je” or “jij”.

Characters usually do not go out of their way to be very polite to one another, and the main character, Tracker, is said to be rather blunt, which would make him even less inclined to use formal constructs such as “u”. Sometimes, it might be interesting to consider the more emphasised version “jij”, when indeed emphasis is at its place, or as a way to subtly reflect nonstandard language use.

Something else to consider is whether or not to translate the names of characters and creatures. Names with an African origin or appearance could be treated similarly to African terms by reproducing them in the translation. They contribute to the African theme and feel of the novel and this will continue to be the case in the target text. Names used to indicate certain people or creatures can indeed be considered as realia, which is for example the case for mingi, shoga and yumboes. It occurs quite often in the novel that a name is used both to indicate a specific individual and its kind. This can be seen by the fact that such names are varyingly preceded by an article, such as is the case with (the) Sangoma and (the) Ipundulu, for example. There are also names for creatures, such as the Aesi, omoluzu and ogo, which do not sound English, and of which one might also think they are derived from African mythologies, even though James came up with those himself. Such names can be treated similarly to names that are actually based on African mythologies, since both kinds help shape the fictional African world that James has created.

However, sometimes English names are also used. In these cases a Dutch variant might be considered, instead of copying the original name, since English sounding names do not necessarily contribute to the novel’s fictional African world. An example is “the Leopard”, which could be translated as “de Luipaard”, a name that is quite similar to the original. The noun “luipaard” can go with the article “het” as well, but since “het” grammatically refers to neutral gender, it is considered more fitting to use “de”, since the word is then grammatically male. For other names for which “the” is used, it sounds more natural to use “de”, rather than “het”, so it is also more consistent to use “de Luipaard”. Other examples for which it might be possible to come up with Dutch terms, are

“shadowings” and “Seven Wing”. Such English terms would stand out much more in the Dutch text, without needing to. A possible translation for “shadowings” for example, might be “schaduwieken”. This seems believable as a name for certain creatures “from the shadow”, and the meaning of the word “wing” is also incorporated in it, which is important because their master, the Aesi, is sometimes said to have black wings.

In English, it is more common to capitalise certain forms of address than is the case in Dutch. In the source text, the title “King” is virtually always capitalised. In Dutch, this title is normally not capitalised (“Koning / koning Willem-Alexander”). Therefore, in the target text, when the word “koning” is used without specifically referring to one individual, the word is written without capital letter. When indeed it is the case that the word refers to a specific person and stands by itself, “koning” will be written with a capital letter. In that case, the word does not merely function as a title, but can be considered a proper noun. Therefore, “King sister” will also be capitalised in the translation (“Koningszuster”), since the sister of Kwash Dara usually goes by this name, without her own name, Lissisolo, being used.

Preferred Translation Strategies

It has been argued that it is possible to provide an adequate translation of the source text without being able to identify and translate all of the words and phrases in African languages. Of course, it might help the translator in understanding the context and thus coming up with a fitting translation, but since James also often provides some context for the utterances himself, it is not so that the text cannot be understood without it. After all, in the source text, those words and phrases also stand out in the English text, and most readers will only be able to guess at their exact meaning. They reinforce the African character of the text by their presence, and will continue to do so in the Dutch translation.

When a translation or elaboration on such a word or phrase is given in the source text, this translation will be transferred to Dutch. Partly, this is out of necessity, since as stated the translator might not be able to identify the language of each utterance and, furthermore, come up with her own translation. What is also important to note, however, is that within the context of the novel, it is more important what meaning and interpretation James provides for such utterances, than what each utterance might possibly mean outside of this context. Often proverbs are used, whereby their literal meaning is not that important, but what is important is what is meant by it metaphorically, what meaning is being attached to it, by the characters and by James himself. It therefore seems acceptable to rely on translations that James provides sometimes and transfer these directly to Dutch.

It has been made clear that the nonstandard syntax that is often used throughout the novel, especially by certain characters, should also be reflected in the translation in some way, since to normalise the language usage would be detrimental to the diversity of the novel's language and its African character. It should be avoided to render speech of characters in a way that might give offence, for example by making characters come across as non-fluent or dumb. This is especially the case for human characters, since the speech of monsters might sometimes contain some nonstandard elements caused by the fact that they indeed do not speak flawlessly. No specific language variety can be used consistently, since the language variety in the source text is also not really existent. The example of Surinamese Dutch might, however, prove helpful, since it contains some peculiarities in its syntax that come across as nonstandard to General Dutch speakers, and are similar to some elements that characterise the nonstandard syntax used in the novel. Some examples include specific cases of double negation; reduplication; omission of elements such as possessive "s"-suffixes, subject personal pronouns, or the copula "be" (zijn); and using word order of normal sentences in questions or subordinate phrases following "that" (dat).

Nonstandard language can also be indicated by features other than syntactic ones, for example by nonstandard orthography. James barely uses this technique, and since it has a large influence on how the language comes across, especially visually, it would perhaps not be fitting to use it very frequently in the translation. However, such features could sometimes be added to reinforce the nonstandard character of language usage, especially in cases where it might be hard to do so in the syntax. Some examples of such orthographic features include devoicing, for example writing “f” instead of “v”; omission of letters or syllables, at the end of words, for example; employing reanalysis, whereby the spelling of words is changed in order to reflect their nonstandard pronunciation (Berthele 594); or eye-dialect, whereby only spelling and not pronunciation is nonstandard, such as when writing “wuz” for “was” (Berthele 596).

Furthermore, since nonstandard elements are not always employed systematically and consistently in James’s novel, and this is also the case in Cairo’s work, for example, it is not always necessary to write words and construct sentences in the same (nonstandard) way, but variations can be made. This will ensure the diversity of the language usage, and allows some freedom in the intensity of the nonstandard character of individual utterances and of the speech of different characters. Hereby the inconsistencies of the source text do not necessarily have to be followed, but the distribution of inconsistency may sometimes be different in the target text, due to concepts such as rhythm, style, or over-all effect.

When translating the speech of characters, it is important to keep in mind who is speaking and what characterises the speech of each character, even though such characteristics sometimes come to the fore less than at other times. The way in which characters speak should help the reader in determining who is speaking. This can be established by differences in features such as the nonstandard character of speech; register; use of specific words or constructions; presence or absence of much repetition; and the use of poetic features such as rhyme and alliteration. Especially

for human characters, the way in which nonstandard speech is rendered should seem plausible, not as if they make mistakes, but as if they speak a different variety.

In translating the oriki, it is deemed important to retain the diversity in the lengths of lines, because this influences the pace in which they are read and/or sung. Repetition is also an important characteristic of the oriki and of oral narratives in general, and care should be taken when translating, that parallels on the level of the word as well as of the line or phrase, should be retained in the translation. In the part of the oriki to be translated, this mainly comes to the fore by the two statements that emphasise its oral character. Other poetical techniques that might be used in the verse include assonance, alliteration, and enjambment.

In general, it will often seem most natural to translate “you” with “je” or “jij”, rather than with the more formal “u”. Titles that are capitalised in the source text will not necessarily be capitalised in the target text; this will depend on whether the title is used in a general way or refers specifically to one person. In translating names, African-based names, or names which might seem African and thereby help shape the world of the novel, will be used unchanged in the translation. English names might be translated if a good Dutch rendition can be found and if no particular reason is found to adopt the name as it is originally given.

Chapter Four:

Translated Fragments

Fragment 1

Focus: nonstandard language use, idiolect Asanbosam, African language element

‘Sasabonsam, broeder van dezelfde moeder, hij houdt van het bloed. Asanbosam, dat is ik³, ik hou van het vlees. Ja, het vlees.’

Ik sprong op. Een stem die klonk als een smerige walm. Ik deed een stap achteruit. Dit was het nest⁴ van één van de oude, vergeten goden, van de tijd toen goden wreed en verdorven waren.

³ Dit zinsdeel is in de brontekst niet ongrammaticaal: ‘that is me’. Dit is een voorbeeld waar ongrammaticaliteit zich in brontekst en doelttekst op verschillende plaatsen en manieren kan uiten. Uit de brontekst blijkt uit Sasabonsams eerste woorden namelijk ook dat hij niet volledig grammaticaal, of in elk geval, niet altijd standaardtaal spreekt, door het zinsdeel erna: ‘I likes’. Aangezien dat wel grammaticaal correct is vertaald, is er dus sprake van compensatie, om toch het effect teweeg te brengen dat het monster niet op een standaard manier spreekt.

⁴ Andere woorden die zijn overwogen zijn bijvoorbeeld schuilplaats en hol. Schuilplaats is echter een wat neutraal woord en een hol doet denken aan iets wat ondergronds is, wat hier niet het geval is. Asanbosam zit namelijk veel in bomen, zoals blijkt uit de zinnen vóór het fragment, waarin zijn prooien zich ‘up in the tree’ bevinden. Kort na het fragment zegt de Luipaard over Asanbosam en zijn broer: ‘They live in trees and attack from above’ (James 81). Bovendien wordt het woord ‘nest’ vaker geassocieerd met monsterlijke wezens, draken bijvoorbeeld. Ook draagt het in relatie tot ongedierte een negatieve connotatie met zich mee.

Of van een demon. Maar overal om me heen hingen⁵ dode mensen. Mijn hart, de trom in mijn binnenste roffelde zo hard dat ik hem kon horen. Mijn trom roffelde uit mijn borstkas en mijn lichaam trilde. De walgelijke stem zei, ‘Goden⁶ sturen ons een vet hapje, ja dat is hij. Een vet hapje sturen ze.’

Ik hou van vlees

En botten

Sasa van bloed

En zaad. Hij stuurt mij⁷ jou.

Ukwau tsu nambu ka takumi ba.

Ik draaide me met een ruk om. Niemand. Ik keek voor me, de jongen. De ogen van de jongen geopend, dat had ik eerder niet gezien. Wijd open, schreeuwend in het niets, schreeuwend dat we te laat waren. *Ukwau tsu nambu ka takumi ba.* Ik herkende de taal. *Het ontbreekt iets doods niet aan*

⁵ Het werkwoord is specifiek gemaakt, omdat het in het Nederlands vreemd staat om hier simpelweg het werkwoord ‘zijn’ te gebruiken. Bovendien blijkt uit eerdergenoemde context dat de lijken inderdaad in bomen hangen.

⁶ Er is gekozen om, net als in de brontekst, het lidwoord hier weg te laten, wat enigszins bijdraagt aan het niet-standaard taalgebruik van Asanbosam. Het zinsdeel uit de brontekst: ‘Gods send us a fat one’, zou kunnen kloppen als Asanbosam de goden hier iets verzoekt, maar dat is niet het geval. Hij spreekt over een voldongen feit, zijn prooi is al binnen gewandeld en hij verheugt zich hierover. Er zou dus eigenlijk ‘the’ voor ‘gods’ moeten staan.

⁷ Een van de kenmerken van Asanbosams taalgebruik is dat hij het over zichzelf heeft aan de hand van ‘we’ en ‘us’. Dit kenmerkende aspect van zijn spraak is in de doelttekst opgenomen, waarbij het ook weleens, zoals hier, gebeurt dat hij de verkeerde vorm gebruikt; ‘we’ waar ‘us’ zou moeten worden gebruikt. Dit kan ook in de doelttekst worden gedaan, door ‘we’ te gebruiken in plaats van ‘ons’.

een verslinder. Ik voelde een windvlaag achter me. Vliegensvlug draaide ik me om. Hij hing ondersteboven. Een enorme grijze hand greep mijn nek en klauwen doordrongen mijn huid. Hij kneep de adem uit mijn lijf en sleurde me mee de boom in. [...]

‘Wij hoort in landen waar geen regen, moeders praten van ons en kindjes bang. Jij het hoort?’⁸ Zeg wij of is waar, verrukkulukje, verrukkulukje.⁹’

En dit, zijn adem, smeriger dan de stank van een rottend lijk, smeriger dan de stront van een

⁸ Niet-standaard eigenschappen van deze twee zinnen in de brontekst zijn het gebruik van de werkwoordsstam of tegenwoordige tijd terwijl het eigenlijk verleden tijd betreft en het weglaten van woorden zoals ‘where [there is] no rain’ en bij ‘mother speak we’. Het niet-standaard karakter van de werkwoorden wordt in de doelttekst weergegeven door het gebruiken van de verkeerde vorm; derde persoon enkelvoud. Ook in de doelttekst staan de werkwoorden in de tegenwoordige tijd, maar door de ‘t’ op het einde dragen de vormen eventueel nog een lichte echo in zich van een voltooid deelwoord. Verder wordt het niet-standaard karakter van Asanbosams spraak aangeduid door het gebruik van een verkeerd voorzetsel in ‘praten van ons’ en doordat de vraag geformuleerd is als een normale zin. Dit gebeurt volgens Wekker en Wekker ook bij Surinaams-Nederlands en kan een subtiele manier zijn om een niet-standaard element aan te brengen in iemands spraak.

⁹ De eventuele verwijzing naar Tolkiens Gollem en zijn uitspraak ‘my precious’ (‘mijn lieveling’) is niet behouden. Wel gebruikt Asanbosam, net als in de brontekst, een woord dat eigenlijk een bijvoeglijk naamwoord is, als een soort aanduiding voor Tracker. Doordat er een verkleinwoord wordt gebruikt, wordt deze functie duidelijker en bovendien komt het daardoor ook wat monsterlijker over. Over het algemeen gebruikt Asanbosam niet hele moeilijke woorden, verrukkelijk is dan wellicht geen woord waar hij makkelijk op zou kunnen komen. Dit is een voorbeeld waarbij de orthografie van een woord kan worden aangepast, om toch het niet-standaard karakter te benadrukken. De aangepaste spelling zorgt ook voor een speelse intertekstualiteit, doordat het woord opgevat zou kunnen worden als echo van Remco Camperts *Het leven is verrukkuluk*.

zieke. Mijn ogen gleden over zijn borst en de richels van botten die zich tegen zijn huid drukten, drie aan de linkerkant, drie aan de rechterkant. Zijn dijen stevige spierbundels, boomstammen boven dunne knietjes. Hij had me goed vastgebonden. Ik hoorde mijn grootvader praten over hoe hij de dood zou verwelkomen wanneer hij wist dat die zou komen, maar op dit moment wist ik hoe idioot dat was. Dat was het soort geklets van iemand die verwachtte in zijn slaap te sterven. En ik zou schreeuwen hoe krom dit was, hoe oneerlijk om de dood te zien komen, en hoe ik tot in de eeuwigheid zou bejammeren dat hij had besloten me langzaam te vermoorden, me te doorboren en me onderwijl te vertellen hoe hij ervan geniet. Aan mijn huid te knauwen en mijn vingers af te hakken, en elke keer dat hij mijn vlees openrijt zal nieuw zijn, elke pijn zal een nieuwe pijn zijn en elke angst zal een nieuwe angst zijn, en ik zal getuige zijn van zijn plezier. En ik zal snel dood willen zijn, want ik lijd zo, maar ik wil niet dood. Ik wil niet dood. Ik wil niet dood.

‘Jij wil niet dood? Jongen, jij nooit van wij hoort? Gauw gauw gauw gauw gauw¹⁰ jij smeekt erom,’ zei hij.

Hij tilde zijn hand op, bedekt met wratten, haar op de knokkels, klauwen aan de vingertoppen, en greep mijn kin vast. Hij rukte mijn kaak open en zei, ‘Mooi tanden. Mooi mond¹¹, jongen.’

Er drupte iets op me uit een lichaam boven me. Dat was de eerste keer dat ik aan de Luipaard dacht. De Luipaard, die zei dat hij om het woud heen zou gaan, maar niemand wist dat het

¹⁰ De ‘s’-klank van het origineel is hier verloren gegaan. Dit hoeft echter niet zo erg te zijn, aangezien de veelvuldige herhaling van de ‘g’-klank ook monsterlijk kan overkomen, doordat het een grauwend effect heeft. Verder is ‘gauw’ ook een kort woord, dat dus makkelijk snel en veel kan worden herhaald, zoals ook bij ‘soon’ het geval is.

¹¹ Een subtiele manier om het taalgebruik niet-standaard over te doen komen, kan ook zijn door soms bepaalde eindklanken weg te laten, zoals hier de ‘e’ van het bijvoeglijk naamwoord.

woud zeven manen breed was. Dat verdomde vormveranderende hoerenjong van een verduiveld kattenloeder¹² zal deze plek verlaten. Asanbosam slingerde zichzelf omhoog en hupte weg.

‘Hij gaat kwaad doen¹³ op wij, dat gaat hij. Kwaad, kwaad, zo vreselijk¹⁴ kwaad. Raak het vlees niet aan tot ik mijn bloed heb, zeg hij¹⁵. Ik ben de oudste, zeg hij. En hij geeft ons een vreselijk pak ransel. Vreselijk. Vreselijk. Maar hij weg en ik honger. En je weet wat erger? Wat nog erger en erger? Hij ook eet het beste vlees, zoals het hoofd. Is eerlijk? Ik vraag eerlijk?’

Toen hij terug naar beneden zwaaide om me weer aan te kijken had hij een hand in zijn mond, de zwarte huid rottend tot groen. Hij beet de vingers af. Met zijn linkerhand reikte hij naar me en een klauw drong in mijn voorhoofd en deed bloed vloeien.

‘Al dagen geen vers vlees,’ zei hij. Zijn zwarte ogen wijd opengesperd, alsof hij me smeekte.

¹² Hoewel met een andere letter, is de alliteratie van de brontekst behouden, wat belangrijk geacht werd omdat de alliteratie de uitspraak vorm geeft en ervoor zorgt dat deze opvalt. Bovendien is er in de doeltekst ook sprake van assonantie door middel van ‘o’- en ‘oe’-klanken. De uitspraak is in de doeltekst ook opvallend door haar lengte en intensiteit en doordat de constructie ‘zoon van een ...’ voor scheldwoorden in het Nederlands niet gebruikelijk is. In de brontekst valt de uitspraak echter ook op door de lengte en doordat de vaste woordcombinatie ‘son of a bitch’ uit elkaar getrokken is.

¹³ Hier blijkt wederom dat Asanbosam over het algemeen redelijk simpele woorden gebruikt. Verder blijkt het non-standaard karakter van zijn spraak uit het feit dat ‘kwaad doen’ geen gebruikelijke woordcombinatie is.

¹⁴ Het zou hier in de doeltekst wat vreemd staan om het woord ‘zo’ te herhalen. ‘[Z]o vreselijk’ geeft ook de juiste intensiteit weer en bovendien is er nog steeds sprake van herhaling, maar met een deel wat een paar zinnen later komt, wanneer Asanbosam het woord ‘vreselijk’ (‘terrible’) herhaalt.

¹⁵ Wanneer Asanbosam zijn broer citeert, spreekt hij opeens grammaticaal correcter. Gelijk daarna wordt dat weer doorbroken door het gebruik van ‘he say’. Dit contrast is in de doeltekst behouden, door het gebruik van ‘zeg hij’.

‘Veel, veel dagen.’

Hij stopte de arm in zijn mond en kauwde er stukje bij beetje op tot er elleboogveles op zijn lippen hing.

‘Heeft zijn bloed nodig, ja dat heeft ’ie, dat zegt ’ie en dat heeft ’ie. Laat ze levend, zeg hij.’

Hij keek me aan, zijn ogen weer wijd opengesperd.

‘Maar hij nooit zegt laat ’m heel.’

Fragment 2

Focus: nonstandard language use, idiolect Ewele and Egbere

Ik rook hun stank van verschroeiing nog voordat ik ze hoorde en wist dat ze me aan het volgen waren.

‘Zowel hij als de grote passen niet, zeggen wij.’

‘Een mootje van de grote? Een mootje moet gaan¹⁶.’

¹⁶ In de brontekst is er sprake van alliteratie (‘piece’ en ‘pass’), waarbij de woorden ook nog verdere overeenkomsten vertonen in klank; beide eindigen met een ‘s’-klank, bestaan uit één lettergreep en hebben een lange klinker. Verder is de uitspraak wat cryptisch, met name ‘a piece is a pass’. In de doelttekst is er ook sprake van klankherhaling, zowel door alliteratie (‘mootje’, ‘moet’; ‘grote’, ‘gaan’) als assonantie (‘mootje’, ‘grote’). ‘A piece is a pass’ slaat hoogstwaarschijnlijk terug op ‘fit’ van de vorige zin; iets past niet, maar wellicht zou een stukje ervan wel passen. Het gebruik van ‘mootje’ doet verder vermoeden dat de twee ‘ghommids’ een mogelijk maaltje bespreken en zorgt voor wat meer kleuring dan woorden als deel of stuk bijvoorbeeld zouden doen.

‘Hij gaan rennen zij gaan rennen, allemaal gaan ze rennen¹⁷, zeggen wij.’

‘Niet als we ze door de dode beek laten gaan. Slechte lucht voert mee op de nachtwind.

Slechte lucht recht de neus in.’

‘Ghehehehe¹⁸. Maar wat doen wij met dat¹⁹ overblijft? Eet ons buikje rond en laat ze op de grond, dan gaan ze rotten en ontbinden tot de gieren ze vinden, die schrokken ze op en worden dik, maar als de honger weer aan wij komt knagen zijn het vlees weg²⁰.’

Deze twee waren vergeten dat ik ze al eens eerder had ontmoet. Ewele, rood en harig, wiens zwarte oogjes piepklein waren, als zaadjes, en die rondsprong als een kikker. De luidruchtige van het stel, vol woede en venijn en snode plannetjes die tot iets zouden komen, ware hij niet zo intelligent als een slome geit. Egberre, de stille van het stel, jammerde hooguit zachtjes, betreurde al die arme mensen die hij had opgegeten, want hij had toch zo’n spijt, zoals hij elke god die maar wilde luisteren

¹⁷ In de brontekst komt de zin ongrammaticaal over door weglatingen: ‘He [is] going [to] run’. In de Nederlandse zin is het lastiger om iets weg te laten, maar wordt het ongrammaticale karakter toch overgebracht doordat het infinitief ‘gaan’ gebruikt wordt, waardoor dat werkwoord dus niet juist is vervoegd.

¹⁸ Om te verduidelijken dat het hier om gelach gaat en er niet herhaaldelijk ‘hè’ of ‘hé’ wordt gezegd, is het aan elkaar geschreven. Op het begin is een ‘g’ toegevoegd om verder te verduidelijken dat het om geniepig gniffelgelach gaat.

¹⁹ Een constructie als ‘datgene wat’ komt te ingewikkeld over voor de ‘ghommids’. Bovendien is er in de brontekst ook sprake van ongrammaticaliteit: ‘what [do] we do’ en ‘the what left’.

²⁰ Wederom is er in de brontekst sprake van veel klankherhaling, aangezien ‘fill’ en ‘still’ rijmen, ‘rot en ‘glut’ dit bijna doen en er ook assonantie is (‘eat’, ‘leave’; ‘spoil’, ‘rot’; ‘vultures’, ‘glut’). In de doelttekst is dit ook weergegeven aan de hand van rijm (‘rond’, ‘grond’; ‘ontbinden’, ‘vinden’). Verder is wederom een ongrammaticale weglating (‘the meat [is] going [to be] gone’) in de doelttekst aangepast tot het onjuiste gebruik van een infinitief.

vertelde, totdat hij opnieuw honger kreeg. Dan was hij nog valser dan zijn neef. Egbere, blauw als het licht op hem viel, maar anders zwart. Haarloos en glimmend in tegenstelling tot zijn harige neef. Allebei klonken ze als grauwende jakhalzen tijdens een gewelddadige vrije partij. En ze wonden zich zo op en vochten zó met elkaar dat ik, tegen de tijd dat ze zich herinnerden om me op te eten, uit hun val was gerold, die bestond uit een net gemaakt van het web van een reusachtige spin.

De Sangoma had me de spreuk nooit geleerd, maar ik had gekeken terwijl ze hem uitvoerde en had elk woord in me opgenomen. Het was ronduit zonde van mijn tijd om de spreuk voor hen te gebruiken, maar ik zou nog veel meer tijd verliezen als ik op hun gekonkel zou moeten wachten. Ik fluisterde haar bezwering de lucht in. De twee kleine ghommids²¹ waren nog steeds aan het kibbelen, terwijl ze boven me van tak tot tak sprongen. En toen:

²¹ In de strategie is aangegeven dat er voor Engelse termen een Nederlandse term kan worden gevonden, ook bij bedachte termen zoals ‘shadowings’. Voor de term ‘ghommid’ is een uitzondering gemaakt, aangezien de term direct verwijst naar belangrijke Afrikaanse literatuur: *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons*. Het werk is nooit naar het Nederlands vertaald en bovendien is de term door Soyinka bedacht omdat hij vond dat er geen geschikt Engels woord bestond om de desbetreffende wezens uit Yoruba-mythologie mee aan te duiden. Het gebruik van een bestaand woord zoals trol is dus eigenlijk niet echt geschikt. Wel is overwogen om de Engelse term wat te vernederlandsen, waarbij termen als ‘ghomiden’, ‘gominiden’ en ‘gommiden’ zijn overwogen. Dergelijke termen komen echter toch behoorlijk vreemd over en roepen niet zozeer het idee van monsterlijke wezens op, zoals ‘ghommid’ dat wel prima in het Engels doet. Een compleet nieuwe term bedenken die authentiek klinkt is een behoorlijke uitdaging en bovendien blijft er dan weinig over van de verwijzing naar Soyinka’s vertaling. Om deze redenen is uiteindelijk gekozen de term toch in het Engels te laten staan.

‘Waar ging ’ie heen? Waar is ’ie naartoe? Waar is ’ie nou?’²²

‘Wiewiewie?’

‘Hijhijhij! Kijk kijk kijk!’

‘Waar istie nou?’²³

‘Dat zegt ik’²⁴ al, idioot.’

‘Hij weg.’

‘En stront stinkt en pis meurt en dom is dom, net als jij.’

‘Hij weg, hij weg. Maar hij paard. Hij nog hier.’

‘Hij zijn een zij.’

²² De drie zinnestjes in de brontekst zijn zeer bondig; ze bestaan uit drie woorden en steeds wordt alleen het werkwoord aangepast. Dit is lastiger in het Nederlands, aangezien werkwoorden in verschillende tijden al snel langdradig worden. Het is met name belangrijk dat de zinnestjes enige paniek uitdragen, aangezien Tracker door een onzichtbaarheidsspreuk opeens voor de ogen van de ghommids verdwijnt en dit hen natuurlijk zeer verbaast. Er is dus op een andere manier geprobeerd lichte variatie in de zinnen aan te brengen en deze kort te houden. Verder is ‘hij’ geschreven als ‘ie’, wat de uitspraken spreektaaliger doet overkomen.

²³ Al is niet helemaal duidelijk welke ghommid wat zegt, de één is wel duidelijk nog minder snugger dan de ander. Waar deze uitspraak in de brontekst ongrammaticaal is, is dit hier niet per se het geval. Wel komt de uitspraak niet als standaardtaal over door de alternatieve spelling, waarbij twee woorden zijn samengevoegd. Verder is de uitspraak een echo van wat de ander eerder al zei, wat het domme karakter ervan versterkt.

²⁴ In het Engels gebruiken de ghommids vaak de stam van werkwoorden in plaats van deze te vervoegen. Om deze ongrammaticaliteit over te brengen in de doelttekst, gebruiken ze vaak de derde persoon enkelvoud waar dit niet juist is. Zoals eerder aangegeven wordt er soms ook een infinitief gebruikt, bijvoorbeeld om ongrammaticaliteit aan te duiden waar het eigenlijk de derde persoon enkelvoud betreft.

‘Wie zei?’²⁵

‘Het paard.’

‘Het paard, het paard, laat wij het paard pakken.’

Ze hupten van de boom naar beneden. Geen van tweeën had een wapen, maar allebei sperden ze muilen open die als een wijde snee van oor tot oor liepen, bomvol lange, puntige tanden. Egber stormde op het paard af en wilde zich op haar romp vastbijten, maar hij rende recht in mijn schoppende voeten en mijn hiel verbrijzelde zijn neus. Hij viel naar achteren en gilde het uit.

‘Waarom schopt je me, verdomde halfkatbastaard?’

‘Ik achter je, stomkop. Hoe kunt ik je in je—’

Ik zwaaide mijn bijl recht op Egber’s voorhoofd af en hakte eropin, trok hem er weer uit en hakte in op zijn nek. Ik zwaaide opnieuw en opnieuw totdat zijn hoofd loskwam. Ewele gilde en gilde dat de wind zijn broer doodt, de wind zijn broer doodt.

‘Ik dacht dat hij je neef was,’ zei ik.

‘Wie is daar, wie is luchtdemon die mijn broer heeft gedood?’

Ik ken de ghommids. Als ze eenmaal overstuur zijn dan zijn ze niet meer te stuiten. Hij zou nooit stoppen met huilen.

‘Je heeft mijn broer gedood!’

‘Hou je koest. Zijn hoofd groeit binnen zeven dagen terug. Tenzij het geïnfecteerd raakt, dan groeit er alleen een enorme pusblaar voor in de plaats.

‘Laat jezelf zien! Ik honger je te doden.’

²⁵ De doelttekst biedt hier de mogelijkheid nog iets meer met de taal te spelen, doordat ‘zij’ en ‘zei’ hetzelfde klinken. Dat is hier niet ongepast, aangezien er al sprake is van miscommunicatie en er veel humor in de rappe dialoog tussen de niet al te snuggere monstertjes is verwerkt.

Jij doodt mijn tijd, trol.’

Fragment 3

Focus: nonstandard language use, idiolect Sogolon, differences in language use of characters

‘Je hebt de geschriften meegenomen?’ zei ik.

‘Ik vond dat er een luchtje²⁶ aan zat. Of misschien was dat gewoon de zure melk.’

Hij lachte maar noch Sogolon, noch ik moest lachen.

‘Jullie volk van beneden de woestijn weten ook niet hoe je moet lachen. Goed, wie is de jongen naar wie jullie op zoek zijn? In welk gezelschap verkeert hij momenteel?²⁷ En hoe zal hij worden gevonden?’

Hij ontvouwde de papieren en Sogolon draaide zich om. Ze kwam dichterbij, maar niet zó dichtbij dat het zou lijken alsof ze probeerde ze te lezen.

‘De papieren lijken verschroeid,’ zei ze.

‘Maar ze vouwen en ontvouwen alsof ze nooit zijn aangeraakt,’ zei Mossi.

²⁶ Deze zin heeft in de doelttekst enigszins een andere betekenis gekregen. In de brontekst hebben de geschriften een ‘air of importance’, hier wordt de nadruk niet op hun belang gelegd, maar op het feit dat er iets niet helemaal in de haak lijkt te zijn. Mossi’s woordgrap kan zo wel bewaard blijven. Bovendien is uit de context van de gebeurtenissen duidelijk dat de geschriften belangrijk zijn en hangt er veel mysterie om de hele zaak met Fumanguru en de zoektocht naar de jongen. Het is daarom niet vreemd dat Mossi aangeeft dat er een luchtje aan zit.

²⁷ In de brontekst wordt Mossi’s taalgebruik gemarkeerd door het gebruik van woorden en constructies die net van een wat hoger register zijn (‘seek’, ‘presently’, ‘shall’). Dit wordt in de doelttekst overgebracht door het gebruik van de vaste combinatie ‘in een gezelschap verkeren’, in plaats van een minder gemarkeerde oplossing zoals ‘wie heeft hem momenteel’.

‘Dat zijn geen schroeiplekken, dat zijn symbolen,’ zei ik. ‘De eerste twee regels in noordelijke stijl, daarna in de stijl van aan de kust. Hij heeft ze met schapenmelk opgeschreven. Maar dat wist je al,’ zei ik.

‘Nee. Nooit geweten.’

‘In je kamer in Kongor zaten overal dit soort symbolen.’

Ze wierp me een dreigende blik toe, maar ze trok haar gezicht weer glad. ‘Ik heef²⁸ er geen een van geschreven. Moet je Bunshi vragen.’

‘Wie?’ zei Mossi.

‘Later,’ zei ik en hij knikte.

‘Ik kan geen noordelijk of kustschrift lezen,’ zei Sogolon.

²⁸ In de brontekst hebben Sogolons werkwoorden vaak dezelfde vorm als bij de monsters het geval is; het infinitief of de stam van het werkwoord (deze komen in het Engels overeen) wordt gebruikt, waarbij het werkwoord dus in tegenwoordige tijd lijkt te staan. In de vertaling worden deze vormen, wanneer het onderwerp in enkelvoud is, vaak omgezet tot een soort stam van het Nederlandse werkwoord. Hierbij wordt de derde persoon enkelvoud aangehouden, maar wordt de ‘t’ op het einde eraf gehaald. De enkelvoudsvorm van ‘hebben’ wordt dan dus ‘heef’. Verder wordt er voor het onregelmatige werkwoord ‘zijn’ de vorm ‘is’ aangehouden, die ook in de derde persoon enkelvoud gebruikt wordt. Op deze manier wordt geprobeerd de manier waarop Sogolon spreekt iets consistentier over te laten komen in vergelijking met de monsters. Een andere manier die is overwogen om het niet-standaard karakter van haar werkwoordgebruik en taalgebruik in het algemeen weer te geven, is door voltooid deelwoorden aan te passen, bijvoorbeeld door van ‘geschreven’ ‘geschreef’ te maken. Dit valt echter veel meer op en bovendien doet het misschien te sterk denken aan Afrikaans, waar dit ook gebeurt.

‘Alle vervloekte goden²⁹, iets wat je niet kan.’ Ik wees met mijn kin naar Mossi. ‘Hij wel.’

De kamer had een bed, al was ik er zeker van dat Sogolon er nooit op een sloop. Het meisje kwam naast haar staan, ze fluisterden, daarna ging ze weer terug naar de deur.

‘Het geschrift dat de prefect vastheeft is er maar één. Fumanguru maak er vijf en eentje is ik opgestuit. Hij zeg dat de monarchie vooruit moet door terug te gaan, waardoor ik meer wilde weten. Heeft je het hele geschrift gelezen?’

‘Nee.’

‘Hoef niet. Saai wanneer hij niet meer over de Koning praat. Daarna is hij gewoon weer zo’n man die vrouwen zeg wat ze moeten doen. Maar voor wat hij over de Koning zeg, zocht ik hem op een avond op.’

‘Waarom zou iets over de oudste³⁰ en de Koning jou aangaan?’ zei ik.

²⁹ Andere opties die hier zijn overwogen zijn bijvoorbeeld ‘vervloek de goden’, ‘verdoem de goden’ en ‘verdomde goden’. De eerste twee houden meer de structuur van de brontekstuiting aan, maar in het Nederlands is het minder gebruikelijk om vloeken op een dergelijke manier op te bouwen. De laatste klinkt wel als een Nederlandse uitroep, maar juist doordat ‘verdomd’ zo’n gebruikelijke Nederlandse krachtterm is, lijkt het niet alsof Tracker de goden echt verwenst en verliest de vloek daarom iets van zijn intensiteit en betekenis. Dit is niet het geval wanneer het meer expliciete ‘vervloeken’ gebruikt wordt. Het woord ‘alle’ is er nog aan toegevoegd om het geheel meer over te doen komen als een vloek.

³⁰ De ‘elders’ zijn een groep bestuurders in Malakal, waartoe Basu Fumanguru, over wie hier gesproken wordt, ook behoorde. ‘Elder’ is in deze context dus een titel, een bepaalde machtsfunctie. Het woord ‘oudste’ kan net als ‘elder’ in bepaalde contexten zo’n bestuurlijke betekenis hebben. De term is in het boek al eerder gevallen en uit de context die er eerder verschaft is, is duidelijk dat het woord in deze betekenis gebruikt wordt.

‘Was nooit voor mij. Waarom denk je niemand kan mij aanraken, Tracker³¹?’

‘Ik—’

‘Hou die bijdehante opmerkingen maar voor je. Ik zocht hem niet op voor mezelf, maar voor iemand anders.’

‘Bunshi.’

Ze lachte. ‘Ik heef Fumanguru opgezocht omdat ik de zuster van de Koning dien. Van wat hij schrijft, klink hij als de man die het begrijpt. Degene die over zijn eigen dikke buik kan kijken om te zien wat fout met het rijk, het koninkrijk, hoe het Noordelijke Koninkrijk geplaagd³² door onheil

³¹ In de strategie is aangegeven dat Engelse namen, zoals ‘the Leopard’ prima vernederlandst kunnen worden. De naam Tracker ligt echter wat lastiger. Het gevaar is dat een vertaling van de naam al snel redelijk kinderlijk overkomt, terwijl het boek bepaald niet is bedoeld voor een jong lezerspubliek, wat blijkt uit de complexiteit van de plot en het geweld dat erin is verwerkt. Een naam als ‘Speurder’ brengt connotaties met ‘speurtocht’ met zich mee, dat kinderlijke connotaties heeft. Bovendien is het een wat archaisch aandoende benaming voor een (privé)detective. Andere namen, zoals Zoeker, Neuzer, Snuffer, Spoorzoeker en Vinder zijn ook overwogen, maar zijn toch niet echt overtuigend bevonden. Bovendien zou het zo kunnen zijn dat de naam Tracker bekend zal raken bij het publiek, als de roman inderdaad verfilmd gaat worden (de filmrechten zijn immers al verkocht). Het zou dan verwarrend kunnen zijn dat het hoofdpersonage in de boekvertaling een andere naam heeft. De naam Tracker draagt natuurlijk betekenis in zich, maar aangezien het lezerspubliek niet te laag hoeft te worden ingeschat, zullen de meeste lezers deze betekenis ook meekrijgen als de naam in het Engels blijft staan.

³² Een andere manier waarop het niet-standaard karakter van Sogolons taalgebruik naar voren komt, is door weglatingen. In de brontekst gebeurt dit ook, bijvoorbeeld door hulpwerkwoorden, persoonlijk voornaamwoorden en het voegwoord ‘that’ weg te laten. In de doelttekst worden dergelijke ‘betekenisloze’

en tegenspoed en oproer, al zolang als een kind het koninkrijk ken. Zijn je ogen het deel tegengekomen waar hij over de geschiedenis van koningen praat? De stamboom van koningen, dit weet ik. Dat wie de koning opvolg verander toen Moki koning werd. Hij hoor geen koning te zijn. Elke koning voor hem was de oudste zoon van de oudste zus van de koning. Zo was het honderden jaren geschreven. Tot nu we heef Kwash Moki.’

‘Hoe is hij koning geworden?’ zei Mossi.

‘Hij vermoordde zijn zus en iedereen die onder haar dak woonde,’ zei ik.

‘En toen de tijd rijp stuur Moki zijn oudste dochter naar het oeroude zusterschap waar geen meisje moeder kan worden. Zo werd zijn oudste zoon Liongo koning. En zo ging jaar na jaar, eeuw na eeuw zodat tegen tijd dat we bij Kwash Aduware aanbeland, iedereen vergeten hoe je koning wordt en wie koning kan worden, tot zelfs de griotten uit verre streken beginnen te zingen dat het altijd zo geweest. Sindsdien dit land vervloekt,’ zei Sogolon.

‘Maar de liederen die alle griotten zingen gaan over het winnen van oorlogen en het veroveren van nieuwe streken. Sinds wanneer zou er sprake zijn van een vervloeking?’

‘Kijk achter de paleismuur. Al de kinderen die hebben overleefd staan genoteerd. Je denk de archieven laten zien welke allemaal zijn gestorven? Teveel dode zonen betekent het koninklijke bloed is zwak³³. Vertellen de archieven van de drie vrouwen die Kwash Netu heef gehad voor hij

grammaticale constructies soms ook weggelaten, zoals hier het geval is met ‘wordt’. Op andere plekken worden bijvoorbeeld ook woorden als ‘dat’, ‘het’ en het hulpwerkwoord ‘is’ weleens weggelaten.

³³ Net zoals eerder bij Asanbosam is gedaan, komt de volgorde van vragen en zinsdelen die volgen na het (eventueel weggelaten) voegwoord ‘dat’, overeen met de volgorde van een normale zin, om op subtiele wijze het niet-standaard karakter van Sogolons spraak weer te geven. Hierin wordt echter gevarieerd, het wordt dus niet altijd toegepast, net zoals er in de brontekst wordt gevarieerd met niet-standaard elementen. In de zin die volgt is er bijvoorbeeld wel sprake van de normale volgorde voor een vraag. Het begin van die zin bevat

eentje vond die hem een prins zou schenken? Kwash Dara verlies zijn oudste broer aan de pest. En hij heeft drie slome zussen omdat zijn vader met concubines aanpapt. En een oom zo gek als een zuidelijke koning en bijna elke vrouw die hem geen zoon geeft vindt vroegtijdige dood. In welk boek dat allemaal opgeschreven? De hele bloedlijn is verrot. Hier is een vraag en geef eerlijk antwoord. Wanneer heeft je voor het laatst regen gezien in Fasisi?

Fragment 4

Focus: African language elements

‘Koning? Dit is de koning. Heb je zijn gezicht weleens gezien? Weet je welke smaak hij in zijn mond heeft? Het is smeriger dan de stront van een zwaardvechter. Dit is je koning? Zullen we hem Khosi noemen, onze leeuw? Breng hem een kaphoonda³⁴ voor zijn koninklijke hoofd. Drie koperen ringen voor om zijn enkel. We moeten spelers van de moondu en de matuumba³⁵ vinden, van alle

echter al op een ander gebied een niet-standaard element. Een object (archieven) kan in standaard Nederlands immers niet ‘vertellen’, aangezien dit wordt gezien als een onwenselijke personificatie.

³⁴ Dit is het enige woord in het fragment waarover geen verdere informatie is gevonden. De lezer kan zich echter wel een voorstelling maken van wat het woord zou kunnen betekenen. Wellicht is het een soort hoofddoek of kroon; in elk geval iets dat je op je hoofd draagt en dat geschikt is voor een koning. Bovendien levert de vertaling van de zin naar het Nederlands geen problemen op; het is duidelijk dat het een zelfstandig naamwoord betreft, waardoor het woord gewoon op de juiste plaats in de zin kan worden gezet.

³⁵ Het was lastig informatie over deze termen te vinden, maar uiteindelijk is voor beide toch een bron gevonden waaruit blijkt dat het inderdaad trommelinstrumenten betreft. *Matuumba* wordt genoemd in een tekst over het Luunda- en Yakavolk, die onder andere leven in het huidige Congo: ‘[T]he *matuumba* drum [a double drum carried around the neck]’ (Roosens 316). Voor *moondu* is alleen een franstalige webpagina

trommen. Zullen we er een xylofoonspeler bij halen? Zullen we alle landstamhoofden³⁶ bijeenroepen om neer te buigen in de rode aarde? Zal ik een haar van mijn hoofd plukken en het in zijn haar steken? En wat is jouw aandeel hierin, riviernimf? Heeft de zogenaamde koningin jou benaderd? Heb jij die nepkoningin benaderd?³⁷ Heeft ze je verteld over hoe glorieus het zal zijn wanneer de koning terugkeert tot de glorieuze moederlijke lijn? Oh mama, ik sla op mijn spleettrommel³⁸ zodat

gevonden die *moondu* noemt als één van de trommen die als communicatiemiddelen dienen, onder andere in Congo (Kayila).

³⁶ In de brontekst is niet helemaal duidelijk wat precies bedoeld wordt met ‘all earth chiefs’. Aangezien de spraak van de Aesi, die aan het woord is, geen niet-standaard elementen bevat zoals die bijvoorbeeld in Sogolons spraak voorkomen, lijkt het niet zo te zijn dat hij refereert naar alle ‘chiefs’ op aarde, aangezien er dan eerder iets als ‘all earth’s chiefs’ had gestaan. Wellicht duidt ‘earth’ dus een specifiek soort ‘chief’ aan. Er is gekozen om ‘earth’ niet te vertalen met ‘aarde’, maar met ‘land’, aangezien verderop in de zin het woord ‘aarde’ ook wordt gebruikt, in een andere context. De herhaling van het woord zou verwarrend kunnen werken.

³⁷ In de brontekst wordt twee keer de aanduiding ‘false queen’ gebruikt. Andere mogelijke vertalingen voor ‘false’ in deze context zijn ‘onwettige’, ‘onechte’, ‘valse’ en ‘schijn’. De eerste twee termen komen echter wat stroef en formeel over, de derde neigt ernaar een *false friend* te zijn en de vierde heeft in combinatie met koning al een andere betekenis. Twee keer ‘zogenaamde koningin’ gebruiken is wat omslachtig en twee keer ‘nepkoningin’ klinkt wel erg informeel. Om deze reden zijn beide termen gebruikt, waarbij de eerste de tweede als het ware inleidt.

³⁸ Een ‘slit drum’ is een instrument van het Yakavolk en een symbool van ‘ngaanga nguumbu diviners’ (‘Nkoko Ngombo’). Op de site van het Belgische AfricaMuseum is ook zo’n trommel te vinden, waarbij de naam ‘spleettrommel’ gebruikt wordt (‘Spleettrommel’). Om deze reden is ‘slit drum’ hier ook met dit woord vertaald.

hij mijn grote vagina een geheim zal vertellen *nkooku maama, kangwaana phenya mbuta*.³⁹ Je hebt je vertrouwen in een slecht orakel gesteld, Koningszuster. Je *ngaanga ngoombu*⁴⁰ heeft tegen je gelogen. Heeft je gedachten vervuld van vervloekt goud. Je had de hulp van een waarzegger⁴¹ moeten vragen. In plaats daarvan heb je jezelf omringd met vrouwen die zelfs door vrouwen vergeten zijn. Kijk dan

³⁹ Voor deze zin was het eerst lastig te bepalen waar het gedeelte in een Afrikaanse taal geplaatst moest worden in de zin, omdat niet precies duidelijk is wat het betekent of waar het op terugslaat. Uiteindelijk is echter een bron gevonden, waarvan het hoogstwaarschijnlijk is dat James deze zelf ook gebruikt heeft. In dit boek wordt in een hoofdstuk over de rituelen van het Yakavolk een ‘divinatory chant’ beschreven, waarna een vertaling volgt: “*Yeebeetaka n-kooku maama, kangwaana phenya mbuta*’ (Oh, mama, I beat my slit drum so that he will confide in my big vagina)’ (Devisch ‘Yaka Divination’ 261). Gezien de gelijkenissen moet de brontekst hier bijna wel op gebaseerd zijn, waarbij James de originele ‘chant’ direct achter de Engelse versie geplaatst heeft, zonder de delen bijvoorbeeld aan de hand van een komma te scheiden. In de doelttekst is deze volgorde en het gebrek aan interpunctie aangehouden.

⁴⁰ ‘Ngaanga’ of ‘nganga’ is een Kikongo term, waarmee ‘diviners’ worden aangeduid (Oyebade 45).

‘Ngoombu’ houdt volgens Devisch ‘mediumistic divination’ in en is onderdeel van een gelijknamige cultus van het Yakavolk (Devisch ‘Yaka Divination’ 243). Een ‘ngaanga ngoombu’ is dus een ‘diviner’ van een specifieke cultus.

⁴¹ Oorspronkelijk werd de term ‘ziener’ ook overwogen, omdat ‘waarzegger’ in het Nederlands misschien eerder Arabische of Oosterse associaties zou kunnen oproepen. Op de website van het AfricaMuseum wordt echter de term ‘waarzegger-genezers’ gebruikt om ‘diviner’ mee aan te duiden (“Spleettrommel”) en ook gebruikt René Devisch in een Nederlands artikel over het Yakavolk de term ‘waarzegger’ wanneer hij het over ‘ngoombu’ heeft (Devisch ‘De therapeut’ 174), waaruit opgemaakt kan worden dat ‘waarzegger’ inderdaad een geschikte en vaker gebruikte term is.

naar hem, hij die je tot koning zou willen kronen. Hij is nog minder dan een ding⁴².

Fragment 5

Focus: verse, orality, nonstandard language use

*Hoor nu wat ik zeg*⁴³

⁴² In het Engels wordt ‘it’ gebruikt om naar kleine kinderen, dieren en objecten of abstracte zaken te verwijzen. In het Nederlands wordt niet op een dergelijke manier naar kinderen of dieren verwezen.

Bovendien moet er in het Nederlands enigszins worden geëxpliciteerd, aangezien iets als ‘hij is minder dan een het’ niet grammaticaal is. Er is overwogen om de uitspraak nog explicieter te maken door het jongetje niet met een ding te vergelijken, maar met iets als ‘een onbezield beest’. De Aesi is redelijk uitgesproken en deinst er niet voor terug om kwetsende dingen te zeggen, dus wat dat betreft zou zo iets dergelijks niet misstaan in zijn dialoog. Toch is ervoor gekozen om de uitspraak, net als in de brontekst, wat neutraler en meer suggestief te houden, door ‘een ding’ te gebruiken. Wel is er wat extra nadruk aan de ernst van de vergelijking toegevoegd aan de hand van het woordje ‘nog’.

⁴³ Deze regel is nu wat anders opgebouwd dan degene die later volgt: ‘Luister naar me nu’. Er zijn opties overwogen zodat de regels meer gelijkenissen vertonen, bijvoorbeeld door beide op ‘nu’ of ‘wat ik zeg’ te laten eindigen. De eerste regel komt echter al snel geforceerd over wanneer deze op ‘nu’ eindigt en ‘hoor me nu’ dekt in het Nederlands de lading niet. De griot wil aangehoord worden, niet simpelweg dat zijn stem gehoord wordt. Wanneer ‘wat ik zeg’ ook in de latere regel wordt toegevoegd, wordt deze wel erg lang, terwijl deze regels in de brontekst juist bondig zijn. De regels echoën elkaar nu dus minder sterk dan in de brontekst het geval is, maar nog steeds is de latere regel een echo van de eerste. Beide zijn redelijk bondig, bevatten het woord ‘nu’ en er worden synoniemen gebruikt (horen en luisteren).

Tien en negen manen is ik⁴⁴ in de baobab gebleven.

De kinderen builden op de dag dat ik vertrok

en Mossi liet zijn hoofd hangen

en zelfs Wolfsoog zeg, Maar waarom verlaat je je thuis?

Maar een man als ik, wij zijn als een wild dier,

we moeten zwerven,

of anders sterven.⁴⁵

Luister naar me nu.

⁴⁴ In de brontekst wordt er ook in de oriki niet-standaard taalgebruik gehanteerd. In dit fragment blijkt dat uit de onvervoegde werkwoorden ‘stay’, ‘cry’ en ‘hang’ uit regel twee, drie en vier en ‘leave’ en ‘come’ uit de laatste twee regels. In de doelttekst zijn daarom ook enkele niet-standaard elementen aangebracht. Net als Sogolon gebruikt de griot ‘is’, waar in standaardtaal ‘ben’ gebruikt zou worden. De regels erna bieden wat minder mogelijkheden om werkwoorden op een dergelijke manier aan te passen. Wel is ter compensatie ‘said’ in regel vijf vertaald als ‘zeg’. Deze vorm wordt vaker zo gebruikt in de doelttekst, onder andere in Sogolons spraak. Bovendien gebruikt de griot in de brontekst eerder in de oriki soms ook de vorm ‘he say’. Tot slot is het laatste werkwoord, ‘come’, vertaald als ‘kom’, wederom vergelijkbaar met de manier waarop Sogolon praat, waarbij het werkwoord niet echt een tijd aangeeft omdat er een soort werkwoordstam wordt gebruikt.

⁴⁵ In de brontekst is er niet vaak sprake van direct rijm, maar het gebeurt zo nu en dan wel. Zo rijmen in de brontekst de vijfde en zevende regels, aangezien deze op ‘home’ en ‘roam’ eindigen. De rijm van ‘zwerven’ en ‘sterven’ in de doelttekst is iets opvallender, aangezien de regels direct op elkaar volgen. De doelttekst biedt hier echter deze mogelijkheid. In de brontekst gebeurt het ook weleens dat twee op elkaar volgende regels rijmen, zoals in de regels ‘*bull back to bull back, one two three four / five six seven more*’ (James 528).

*De dag voor mijn vertrek kom er*⁴⁶

Een zwart Luipaard naar de boom.

Fragment 6

Focus: dialogue, African language elements, themes of storytelling and truth

‘*Edjirim ebib ekuum eching otamangang na ane-iban,*’ zei ze. ‘Wanneer het duister valt, omarm je je vijanden.’

‘Vertaal je dat voor mij of voor hem?’

‘Je verraadt waarvoor je zo lang heef gevochten?’ zei Sogolon.

‘Kijk jou eens, Maanheks. Je ziet er nog niet eens driehonderd jaar oud. Maar goed, *gunnugun ki ku lewe*⁴⁷. Hoe heb je het overleefd nog eens door die deur te gaan?’

‘Je verraadt waarvoor je lang heef gevochten,’ zei ze weer.

‘Ben je tegen mij aan het praten of tegen de Luipaard?’ vroeg ik.

⁴⁶ Het werkwoord ‘come’ is in de doelttekst naar de regel ervoor gehaald. Het werkwoord staat in het Nederlands sowieso op een andere plaats, eerder in de zin. Wanneer de laatste regel zou beginnen met het werkwoord, is er minder nadruk op ‘een zwart Luipaard’, dat juist nadruk moet hebben, omdat hij uit het niets in het vers en in Trackers leven opduikt. Door het werkwoord naar de eerdere regel te halen is er bovendien sprake van enjambement, een poëtisch middel dat ook in de brontekst-oriki weleens wordt toegepast.

⁴⁷ Deze zin werd door een Yorubaspreker herkend als een aanhef voor gebed, die zich laat vertalen naar iets als ‘de gier sterft niet jong’. Tracker lijkt het hier in negatieve zin te gebruiken, aangezien hij niet bepaald iets goeds over Sogolon te zeggen heeft. Het gezegde is ook op een webpagina gevonden, waar deze vertaling ook gegeven wordt, maar ook wat men er daadwerkelijk mee wil zeggen: ‘May you live long’ (Adenekan). Het gezegde heeft dus eigenlijk juist een positieve betekenis, maar wordt hier in negatieve zin gebruikt.

Hij keek me recht aan. Sogolon en de jongen stonden aan de rand van het water en zelfs in het halfduister zag ik hun weerspiegeling. De jongen zag eruit als de jongen, de fakkel rondde zijn grote hoofd af. Sogolon zag eruit als een schim. Geen kaolienklei en overal zwarter dan zwart, zelfs op haar hoofd, waarop veren noch haren te bekennen waren.

‘Ach Luipaard, is er dan niemand meer over? Niemand die je kan laten stikken?’ vroeg ik.

Hij zei niks, maar trok zijn zwaard. Ik bleef maar kijken naar die zwarte figuur in het water, de fakkel in haar hand. Het water was stil en kalm, donkerblauw als de vallende nacht. In de weerspiegeling zag ik de Luipaard op het kind afrennen. Ik keek op net toen hij zijn zwaard richting het hoofd van het jongetje zwaaide. Sogolon draaide zich niet eens om, maar creëerde prompt een harde windvlaag, die de Luipaard omver blies, hem de lucht in zwiepte en hem tegen een boom smakte. Gelijk achter hem werd zijn zwaard ook door de wind de lucht in geslingerd en schoot vervolgens als een pijl recht in zijn borstkas, zodat hij aan de boom genageld werd. Zijn hoofd zakte op zijn borst. [...]

‘Ik had nooit voor je moeten komen. Had je nooit uit je boom moeten halen,’ zei hij hoestend.

‘Je kwam voor me omdat je wist dat ik zou gaan. Hier volgt waarheid⁴⁸. Ik was verliefd en ik

⁴⁸ Zoals eerder is gebleken is ‘here is truth’ een formulering die vaak wordt gebruikt in het boek, vaak door Tracker, ook weleens door een ander personage, zoals de Luipaard of Sogolon. Bovendien worden er soms nog variaties op gemaakt, zoals ‘here is a true thing’ en ‘this is truth’. Deze woorden dienen om te benadrukken wat erop volgt, vaak een bepaald inzicht of bepaalde visie, of een choquerend feit. De formuleringen zijn in de brontekst niet erg standaard, zo zou het bijvoorbeeld gebruikelijker zijn een lidwoord toe te voegen (‘the truth’). Een vertaling als ‘dit is de waarheid’ komt te algemeen over en is niet erg gemarkeerd. Wanneer het lidwoord weg wordt gelaten, komt de vertaling misschien juist te vreemd over. Dat

was verveeld, allebei tegelijkertijd, als twee heersers in hetzelfde huis. Ik werd gek.’

‘Ik zorgde ervoor dat je wegging. Weet je nog wat ik zei? *Nkita gbara igbo uja a guo ya aba ozu*⁴⁹.’

‘Als een wolf weigert te huilen, dan zullen mensen hem een andere naam geven.’

‘Dat was gelogen. Het is als een hond weigert te blaffen.’

Ik moest lachen, hij probeerde het ook.

‘Ik ging weg omdat ik zelf wilde.’

‘Maar ik wist dat je het zou doen. In Fasisi, toen ze vroegen: Hoe wil je deze man gaan vinden? Hij ... is al twintig manen dood. Toen zei ik ... ik zei—’ Hij hoestte. ‘Ik zei, ik ken een zekere Tracker⁵⁰ die nooit een goeie uitdaging kon weerstaan. Hij zegt dat hij het voor het geld doet, maar het werk zelf is waar het hem echt om gaat⁵¹, al zal hij dat nooit toegeven.’

‘Ik had nooit weg moeten gaan,’ zei ik.

is iets minder het geval wanneer het werkwoord ‘volgen’ wordt gebruikt. Bovendien slaat de uiting inderdaad op wat erop volgt, wat door het gebruik van dit woord wordt verduidelijkt.

⁴⁹ Deze zin is herkend als Igbozegde, dat inderdaad staat voor iets als ‘if a dog does not bark, it will be given another name’.

⁵⁰ In de brontekst staat Tracker hier zonder hoofdletter gegeven, waardoor extra aandacht gevestigd wordt op de daadwerkelijke betekenis van het woord; Tracker is goed in het opspeuren van mensen en dingen. Aangezien het geen Nederlands woord betreft, zou het vreemd zijn Tracker zonder hoofdletter in de doelttekst op te nemen. De optie ‘ik ken een zekere Tracker’ is wat bondiger dan iets als ‘ik ken iemand genaamd Tracker’. Bovendien zal de betekenis van de naam de meeste lezers waarschijnlijk al niet ontgaan zijn, aangezien het lezerspubliek, zoals eerder vastgesteld, redelijk hoog mag worden ingeschat.

⁵¹ Een andere optie die hier is overwogen is ‘het werk zelf is zijn echte verdienste’. Uiteindelijk is deze optie niet gekozen omdat deze van een iets hoger register is, dat beter bij een personage als Mossi zou passen.

‘Nee, je had niet weg moeten gaan. Wat leiden we toch voor levens. Berouw over wat we niet hadden moeten doen, spijt over wat juist wel had moeten. Ik mis het om een luipaard te zijn Tracker. Ik mis het om nooit ‘had ik maar’⁵² te denken.’

‘En nu ga je dood.’

‘Luipaarden kennen de dood niet. Ze denken er nooit aan, want het is niks om aan te denken. Waarom doen we dit Tracker? Waarom denken we aan niks?’

‘Ik weet het niet. Omdat we iets moeten hebben om in te geloven.’

‘Een man die ik gekend heb, zei dat hij niet in geloof geloofde.’ Hij lachte en moest hoesten.

‘Een man die ik gekend heb, zei dat niemand van niemand houdt.’

‘Een stel dwazen. Allebei dw...’

Zijn hoofd viel in mijn armen.

Geef ze geen rust, kat. Vind nieuwe uitdagingen in de onderwereld en troef haar heersers af, dacht ik, zonder het hardop te zeggen. Hij was de eerste man van wie ik kan zeggen dat ik gehouden heb, al was hij niet de eerste tegen wie ik het zou zeggen.

Ik vroeg me af of ik ooit zou stoppen na te denken over deze jaren en wist dat ik dat niet zou doen, want ik zou proberen er enige zin in te vinden, of een verhaal, of zelfs een reden voor alles, zoals ik die hoor in heldenverhalen⁵³. Verhalen over eerzucht en missies, terwijl wij niks

⁵² Er is geen Nederlands woord gevonden dat alle hier relevante connotaties van ‘should’ in zich draagt. De Luipaard doelt er hier op dat dieren, in tegenstelling tot mensen, geen last hebben van schuldgevoelens en zich niet voortdurend zorgen maken of ze wel de juiste keuze maken in wat ze wel en niet doen. Deze betekenis zit ook vervat in de woorden ‘had ik maar’. Net zoals bij ‘should’ het geval is, zijn er veel situaties te bedenken waarbij men kan denken: ‘had ik dat maar gedaan’ of juist ‘had ik dat maar niet gedaan’.

⁵³ ‘De klassieke verhalen’ is ook overwogen, maar dit doet waarschijnlijk te sterk denken aan Griekse en Romeinse mythes. Andere opties die zijn overwogen zijn ‘de bekende verhalen’, ‘de gevierde verhalen’ en

hebben gedaan dan te proberen een jongen te vinden, om een reden die vals bleek te zijn, voor mensen die vals bleken te zijn.

Misschien was dit wel hoe alle verhalen eindigen, die met echte vrouwen en mannen, echte lichamen die verwondingen en de dood te verduren krijgen en waarin echt bloed vergoten wordt. En misschien is dit waarom de heldenverhalen die we vertellen⁵⁴ zo anders zijn. Want we vertellen verhalen om te leven en dat soort verhalen hebben een doel nodig, dus dat soort verhalen moeten wel een leugen zijn. Want aan het einde van een echt verhaal bevindt zich niets anders dan verderf.

‘legendarische verhalen’. ‘Heldenverhalen’ is gekozen omdat dit een vaste en logische combinatie is.

Bovendien versterkt het gebruik van het woord ‘helden’ het contrast dat geschetst wordt tussen de ruige werkelijke wereld en de manier waarop de wereld en haar inwoners in verhalen worden beschreven.

⁵⁴ Het lijkt wellicht logischer als er in de brontekst ‘the stories we’re told’ had gestaan in plaats van ‘the stories we told’. Daarom is overwogen dit te vertalen als ‘de heldenverhalen die we te horen krijgen’. Uiteindelijk is toch gekozen om uit te gaan van wat er daadwerkelijk in de brontekst staat en ‘vertellen’ te vertalen. Er is namelijk wel sprake van een betekenisverschil tussen beide opties. ‘De verhalen die we vertellen’ komt over als een algemene opmerking, waarbij Tracker zichzelf betreft bij degenen die verhalen vertellen; hij is dan zelf dus ook schuldig aan het verbloemen van de werkelijkheid. In het geval van ‘de verhalen die we te horen krijgen’ is Tracker zelf niet een van degenen die zulke verhalen vertelt.

Chapter Five:

Conclusion

This thesis aimed to explore in what ways the African character of the novel as seen through the way in which language is used, can be conveyed in Dutch translation. James has written the novel because he felt there was a need for literature, and more specifically fantasy fiction, in which he could recognise himself. Rather than being based on European mythologies, the work is based on African cultures and mythologies and takes place in a fictional Africa. African influences can thus be seen in the novel on many levels. Mythological African creatures come to life in the fictional world that is portrayed, the act of storytelling is highly thematised, utterances in African languages are included in the text and even while characters speak English, their language usage is influenced by African languages. If no way is found to properly convey the “Africanness” of the novel’s language in the target text, an important aspect of the novel will be lost. It greatly influences the novel’s style and can furthermore be seen as a sort of statement in providing literature that has a distinctly “African feel” about it.

In the analysis, it came to the fore that translating African literature often involves a double process, since “African thought” has first been transferred to a non-African language by the author, and subsequently the resulting work is to be translated to yet another (non-African) language. This might complicate the task of the translator. At the same time, in some instances it can actually prove to be helpful. In the novel, many of the African language terms that James employs can be considered to be *realia*. While *realia* can be quite difficult to translate, James provides some direction here, since he himself has already chosen a strategy in how to deal with such elements. After all, he often chooses to adopt the term in its original language in his work, and makes its meaning clear by the context he provides. While such African language terms might be unfamiliar to the Dutch reader

audience, the same goes for its original English reader audience. Such terms contribute to the novel's Africanness and provide colour, both in the source and target text.

In the case where not just one word is used, but an entire phrase, it becomes harder to identify the meaning of such phrases, especially since James does not simply use one specific African language and also does not elaborate on what languages he uses exactly. In formulating the translation strategy regarding such phrases, it was already mentioned that it is deemed more important what meaning James contributes to such phrases, as becomes clear from the way he uses them and the (indirect) translation he sometimes provides, than what such phrases might literally mean and in what significance they normally tend to be used. In the translation of the fragments, this reasoning has turned out to be especially relevant, since it turned out that James indeed does not always use such phrases in a manner in which they tend to be used, as becomes clear by the way in which the phrase "*gunnugun ki ku lewe*" (James 614) is used. While in Yoruba the phrase is used to wish someone long life, it is unlikely that the phrase is meant like that here, since Tracker says it to Sogolon, whom he despises. However, despite the fact that it was argued that the translator, in order to make a decent translation, does not necessarily need to know exactly what each African language phrase means, in some cases this might prove problematic, since the translator might not be able to determine without doubt where the phrase should be placed in a Dutch sentence if it is unclear what the phrase refers to.

Finding a way to transfer the nonstandard quality of the language that is used in the novel, especially by certain characters, such as Sogolon and the monsters, proved to be most challenging. It would be problematic to choose a strategy that would link the language usage of characters to specific language varieties. Firstly, this does not happen that specifically in the source text, since no truly existing language variety is used. However, even if that were the case, this strategy might be problematic, since the characters in the target text would then be linked to another region or group

of people than would be the case in the source text, which could cause problems of identity. While standardisation seems to occur quite often in translation of dialects and nonstandard language, it would mean a considerable loss in the novel's style and "African feel", and would also make the speech of characters less distinctive. This might then cause the novel to become somewhat flatter, more so by the fact that when characters cannot be differentiated by their way of speaking, it might have to be stated more explicitly who says what, which can easily become tiresome.

The strategy that was deemed most appropriate in this case was to come up with a sort of fictional language variety, whereby existing language varieties in which African influences can be recognised, such as Surinamese Dutch, can serve as inspiration. However, when adopting this strategy, there are many things that need to be taken into consideration. While the language variety should come across as authentic, it should not resemble any existing variety too much. Readability should also be taken into account, especially since the novel in itself is already quite complex. Very importantly, the way in which nonstandard language is portrayed should not be objectionable, for example by validating stereotypes or ridiculing ways of speaking. The nonstandard quality the language sometimes has should provide an extra dimension, not conjure up negative associations. While all these aspects must certainly be kept closely in mind while translating, in reality it might be very hard to come up with a translation that fully meets all these requirements.

The way in which nonstandard language was eventually rendered in the translated fragments, was mostly by using altered verb forms, changing word order, for example in questions and subordinate sentences, and by omitting certain words that serve more grammatical purposes than they provide meaning, such as auxiliary verbs, articles, and subordinator "dat" ("that"). Especially for verb use, in Sogolons speech it was deemed more important to uphold some level of consistency than was the case for monster speech, since Sogolons speech should more clearly seem a language variety rather than her speaking in a flawed manner. Like in the source text, however, nonstandard

elements were not applied in a completely consistent way. Renderings of dialect or nonstandard language in literature often do not accurately represent the way in which such language is actually used in real life, but rather serve to give the impression of a certain language variety being used. As was suggested in the translation strategy, orthographic strategies are used only occasionally to convey the nonstandard character of certain utterances. While other possible techniques, such as reduplication and double negation were also mentioned in the translation strategy, these were eventually not used. Wordings such as “nooit niet” might stand out too much and disrupt the flow of the text. Since nonstandard language use tends to be an even more sensitive issue in translation, it is crucial to find a balance between showing the nonstandard character of language use and not doing so in a disproportionate way that overly distracts, or even disturbs, the reader. It is of course hard to determine whether the current translations have indeed succeeded in finding this balance, but the importance of doing so was kept in mind.

While the formulated strategy for translating verse placed much importance on the repetitive structure of the lines “hear me now” and “listen to me now”, in the eventual translation the natural flow of the text was also considered to be quite important, so that a decision was made in which the repetition is slightly less pronounced. Oriki is an oral poetry form, whereby it is of course also quite important that the language that is used does not come across as too forced. Alliteration and assonance are not used very noticeably either, but some rhyme is included, as well as enjambment. In other parts of the translation, alliteration and assonance are also kept in mind, however, for example in certain elements of the speech of Ewele and Egbere and in the curse that Tracker uses to refer to the Leopard in the first fragment.

Should the novel actually be translated to Dutch, quite a few considerations should be made. First of all, it has been shown that it would prove helpful, and in some cases rather necessary, for the translator to know what the African language phrases refer to and what they mean. It would

therefore definitely be helpful if contact with the author would be possible. Since so many different languages are used and not much information is given on this, it would be unrealistic to expect the translator to figure out herself the significance of such phrases, because that would simply be too time-consuming. Once relevant information is obtained, the translator could decide to do more with the information, rather than just use it for her own understanding of the text and for placing the elements in the correct part of a Dutch sentence. Such decisions should be well-weighed, however, since James after all has not always included information on the exact meaning of words and phrases. The addition of a glossary, for example, would take away much of the mystery that the use of such African elements invokes.

While the importance of the use of nonstandard language is outlined, the publisher might prefer a more standardising strategy, since this often happens in translation of nonstandard language and would probably make the translation appealing to a broader reader audience, which would commercially be beneficial. Furthermore, if indeed a film is made based on the novel, this might also influence the sales of the translation, as well as what the audience expects from it. If it is decided, for example, that all characters in the film speak English in a similar way, people might find it strange if characters like Sogolon speak in a different way in the novel. In adopting a strategy for Sogolons nonstandard language usage, it should also be kept in mind that she is supposed to be the main character in the next book of the trilogy. Her language usage should of course not be radically different in the translation of the next novel, in which her way of speaking is bound to be much more present.

A discussion point that has not really been touched upon previously, concerns the ethnicity of the translator. During the Dutch translation event *Vertaalslag 2019*, the question was posed whether it would be different if a white translator translates the book of a black author, than if a black translator would (Bootsma). No decisive answer was found, since this is of course a sensitive

issue. Having a relevant cultural background might of course help to fully appreciate the nuances of the text. This does not mean, however, that a translator with a non-African background would per definition produce a worse translation. It does mean, without doubt, that a translator should be aware of possible cultural differences and should not be afraid to reach out to relevant sources where necessary.

The current research has focused on specific aspects of the way in which language is used in the novel. While much may already be written on the topic, the translation of nonstandard language continues to be a complex issue, worthy of research. While standardisation is of itself a valid strategy, it is quite interesting to explore in what ways the nonstandard character of language may somehow be conveyed in another language, while also trying to produce a similar effect on the reader audience. Furthermore, since the novel that is analysed is so diverse and voluminous, many other aspects of it might be equally interesting for further research. As already touched upon in the introduction, many intertextual references may be found, for example, so it might be interesting to explore how intertextuality might be dealt with in its translation.

Appendix A:

Source Text of Translated Fragments

Fragment 1

Tracker has set off with the Leopard in search of a mingi boy who has run away and taken something from the Sangoma, which she wants returned. Tracker is walking through a forest, the Leopard is going around it. A sense of foreboding is in the air, and then Tracker sees dead people up in the trees, with their entrails hanging out. A monstrous voice starts to speak.

“Sasabonsam, brother from the same mother, he likes the blood. Asanbosam, that is me, I likes the flesh. Yes, the flesh.”

I jumped. A voice that sounded like a stench. I stepped back. This was the lair of one of the old and forgotten gods, back when gods were brutish and unclean. Or a demon. But all around me were dead people. My heart, the drum inside me beat so loud I could hear it. My drum beat out of my chest and my body trembled. The foul voice said, “Gods send us a fat one, yes he is. A fat one they send us.”

I likes the flesh

And bone

Sasa like blood

And seed. He send we you.

Ukwau tsu nambu ka takumi ba

I spun. No one. I looked in front, the boy. The boy’s eyes open, I did not notice before. Wide open, screaming at nothing, screaming for us being too late. *Ukwau tsu nambu ka takumi ba*. I knew the tongue. *A dead thing does not lack a devourer*. The wind shifted behind me. I spun around. He hung upside down. A huge gray hand grabbed my neck and claws dug into the skin. He squeezed the breath out of me and pulled me up into the tree. [...]

“We hear in lands where no rain, mother speak we and frighten children. You hear it? Tell we true, delicious, delicious.”

And this, his breath, fouler than corpse rot, fouler than the shit of the sick. My eyes followed his chest and the ridges of bones pushing under his skin, three on the left, three on the right. His thighs thick with muscle, tree trunks above skinny knees. He tied me up tight. I heard my

grandfather talk of how he would welcome death when he knew it was coming, but right here I knew he was a fool. That was the kind of talk from someone who expected death to meet him in sleep. And I would scream how wrong this was, how unfair to see death coming, and how I will cry in an eternal sadness that he chose to kill me slow, to pierce me and all the while tell me how he delights in it. To chew away at my skin and chop my fingers, and each tear of flesh will be a new tear, and each pain will be a new pain and each fright will be a new fright, and I will watch his pleasure. And I will want to die quick because I suffer so, but I do not want to die. I do not want to die. I do not want to die.

“You no want to die? Young boy, you never hear of we? Soon soon soon soon soon you begging for it,” he said.

He took his hand, warts all over, hair on the knuckles, claws at the fingertips, and grabbed my chin. He yanked my jaw open and said, “Pretty teeth. Pretty mouth, boy.”

A body above dripped something on me. That was the first time I thought of the Leopard. The Leopard, who said he would go around the bush, but nobody knew the bush was seven moons wide. The shape-shifting son of a sniveling cat bitch will leave here. Asanbosam swung himself up and hopped away.

“He going be angry with us, he will. Angry, angry, so so angry. Don’t touch the flesh until I have my blood, he say. I am the oldest, he say. And he whip us terrible. Terrible. Terrible. But he gone and I hungry. And you know what worse? What worse and worse? He too eat the best flesh, like the head. Is fair? I ask fair?”

When he swung back down to face me, a hand, black skin rotting to green, was in his mouth. He bit the fingers off. He reached for me with his left hand and a claw dug into my forehead and drew blood.

“No fresh flesh in days,” he said. His black eyes opened wide, as if pleading with me.

“Many, many days.”

He put the arm in his mouth, chewing bit by bit until elbow flesh hung on his lips.

“Need his blood yes he do, so he say and he do. Leave them alive, he say.”

He looked at me, his eyes open wide again.

“But he never say leave you whole.” (James 78-81)

Fragment 2

Tracker is passing through a dangerous forest, called the Darklands. He did not wish to go through it, because he has done so once before, but despite his and Sogolon's warnings, the Leopard, the Leopard's young lover Fumeli and Sadogo have gone in and Tracker has gone after them to make sure they are okay. Tracker has a vision in a pond where he lets his horse drink. He sees a man with black clothes and short red hair, who seemingly has black wings, and who later turns out to be the Aesi. He backs away and walks further through the forest, and then comes across Ewele and Egbere.

I smelled their burn stink before I heard them, and I knew they were following me.

“Neither him nor the big one fit, we say.”

“A piece of the big one? A piece is a pass.”

“He going run she going run, they all going run, we say.”

“Not if we make them go through the dead brook. Bad air riding the night wind. Bad air straight through the nose.”

“He he he he. But what we do with the what left? Eat we fill and leave them still, and they going spoil and rot and vultures going glut, till they fat and when hunger come for we again the meat going gone.”

These two had forgotten that I had met them before. Ewele, red and hairy, whose black eyes were small as seeds, and who hopped like a frog. The loud one, bursting with rage and wickedness, and so much plotting that would come to something were he not as smart as a stunned goat. Egbere, the quiet one, raised no more than a whimper, crying over all the poor people he ate, for he was so very sorry, he told any god who would listen, until he was again hungry. Then he was more vicious than his cousin. Egbere, blue when the light hit him but black otherwise. Hairless and shiny where his cousin was hairy. Both sounded like jackals growling in a violent fuck. And they fussed, and fought so much that by the time they remembered to eat me, I had rolled out of their trap, a net made from the web of a giant spider.

The Sangoma never taught the spell to me, but I watched her as she did it, and learned every word. Such a waste of time it was to use the spell on them, but I would lose much more waiting on them to plot. I whispered into the sky her incantation. The two little ghommids quarreled still, even as they hopped from branch to branch above me. And then:

“Where he gone? Where he go? Where he went?”

“Whowhowho?”

“Himhimhim! Look look look!”

“Where him gone?”

“So I say already, fool.”

“Him gone.”

“And shit stink and piss rank and fool is fool, just like you.”

“He gone, he gone. But he horse. He still there.”

“He be a she.”

“She who?”

“The horse.”

“The horse, the horse, let we take the horse.”

They hopped down from the tree. Neither carried weapons, but both opened mouths wide as a slit cut from ear to ear, with teeth, long, pointed, and numerous. Egbere charged at the horse to leap for her rump but ran into my kicking feet, my heel smashing his nose. He fell back and screamed.

“Why you kick me, son of a whoring half cat?”

“Me behind you, you fool. How me to kick you in the—”

I swung the hatchet right for Egbere’s forehead and chopped in deep, pulled it out, and chopped into his neck. I swung again and again until his head came off. Ewele screamed and screamed that the wind is killing his brother, the wind is killing his brother.

“I thought he was your cousin,” I said.

“Who is it, who is demon of sky that killed my brother?”

I know the ghommids. Once upset they are out of control. He would never stop crying.

“You kill my brother!”

“Shut your face. His head will grow back in seven days. Unless it gets infected, then he will just grow back one big ball of pus.”

“Show yourself! I am hungry to kill you.”

“You kill my time, troll.” (James 232-234)

Fragment 3

The fellowship, currently existing of Tracker, Sogolon, Sadogo, Mossi, Venin and the Buffalo, has been led by Sogolon to the house of a man who she says owes her. Later, he turns out to be a griot, the one who sings about love

lost and loneliness. Tracker has come to Sogolon's room to talk with her, because he suspects she is keeping secrets about their quest. Mossi also walks into the room and wishes to know more, since he has not been with the fellowship for long. He was a prefect in Konger, and was intrigued by Tracker's investigations there. Although he was at first suspicious, he later helped Tracker when he was looking for documents in Kongor's library. Someone set fire to it and they had to flee Kongor, Mossi included. It is now revealed that Mossi has taken the writs they were looking at in the library with him, so they were not lost to the fire.

"You took the writs?" I said.

"Something about them had the air of importance. Or maybe just sour milk."

He smiled but neither I nor Sogolon laughed.

"No laughter to you people below the desert. So, who is this boy you seek? Who presently has him? And how shall he be found?"

He unfolded the papers, and Sogolon turned around. She moved in closer, but not so close it would look like she was trying to read them.

"The papers look burn," she said.

"But they fold and unfold like papers untouched," Mossi said.

"Those are not burns, they are glyphs," I said. "Northern-style in the first two lines, coastal below. He wrote them down in sheep milk. But you knew this," I said.

"No. Never know."

"There were glyphs of this kind all over your room in Kongor."

She glared at me quick, but her face smoothed. "I don't write none of them. Is Bunshi you must ask."

"Who?" Mossi said.

"Later," I said, and he nodded.

"I don't read North or coastal mark," Sogolon said.

"Well fuck the gods, there is something you cannot do." I pointed at Mossi with my chin. "He can."

The room had a bed, though I was sure Sogolon never slept on one. The girl went beside her, they whispered, then she went back to the door.

"The writ the prefect holding be just one. Fumanguru make five, and one come across where I stay. He say the monarchy need go forward by going back, so that make me want to know more. You read the whole writ?"

“No.”

“Don’t have to. Boring once he stop talking about the King. Then he just turn into one more man telling woman what to do. But for what he say about the King, I find him one night.”

“Why would anything about the elder and the King concern you?” I said.

“It never was for me. Why you think no man can touch me, Tracker?”

“I—”

“Don’t bother with the smart tongue. I didn’t call on him for me, but for somebody else.”

“Bunshi.”

She laughed. “I find Fumanguru because I serve the sister of the King. From what he write, he sound like the one man who understand. The one who could look past his own fattening belly to see what wrong with the empire, the kingdom, how the North Kingdom being plagued by evil and misfortune and malcontent for as long as a child know the kingdom. Your eyes pass the part where he talk about the history of kings? The line of kings, this I know. That who succeed the King change when Moki become King. He not supposed to be King. Every King before him was the oldest son of the King’s oldest sister. So it was written for hundreds of years. Until now we have Kwash Moki.”

“How did he become King?” Mossi said.

“He murdered his sister and all under her roof,” I said.

“And when the time come Moki send his oldest daughter to the ancient sisterhood where no girl can become a mother. That way his oldest son, Liongo, become King. And so it go for year after year, age after age that when we come to Kwash Aduware, everybody forget how one become King and who can become King, so that even the faraway griots start singing that so always be the way. This land curse ever since,” Sogolon said.

“But all the griots’ songs sing of winning wars and conquering new lands. When exactly did a curse happen?”

“Look behind the palace wall. The records show all the children who live. You think it going show all the children who die? Too many dead sons mean the royal blood weak. Records, do they tell you of the three wives Kwash Netu have before he find one that would give him a prince? Kwash Dara lose his first brother to plague. And have three slow sisters because his father breeding concubines. And one uncle as mad as a southern king, and death strike nearly every wife who don’t give him a son. In which book all of that write? Rot run through the whole family. Here is a question and answer it true. When you last see rain in Fasisi?” (James 367-369)

Fragment 4

The fellowship, now consisting of Tracker, the Leopard, Mossi, Sadogo, the Buffalo, and Nsaka Ne Vampi, have finally managed to take the boy from his monstrous captors. The Ipundulu is finally killed, but Sasabonsam has managed to get away. They take the boy to his mother, the King Sister, who claims that the boy has a rightful claim on the throne, because successors used to come from the motherly line. However, when they get there, the Aesi is there, holding Bunsbi hostage. The Aesi claims he wants what is best for the King, the King Sister accuses him to want what is best for him and calls him a necromancer and God butcher. There is a lot of tension in the air, and then the Aesi confronts the King sister.

“King? This is the King. Have you seen his face? Do you know the taste in his mouth? It is fouler than the swordsman’s shit. This is your King? Shall we call him Khosi, our lion? Get him a kaphoonda for his royal head. Three brass rings for his ankle. We should call players of moondu and matuumba, and all drums. Shall we call xylophone? Shall we call all earth chiefs to come and bow down in red dirt? Shall I pluck a hair from my head and stick it in his? And what is your stake in this, river nymph? Did the false queen seek you? Did you seek the false queen? Did she tell you of how glorious it will be when the King returns to the glorious line of mothers? Oh Mama, I beat my slit drum so that he will tell a secret to my big vagina *nkooku maama, kangwaana phenya mbuta*. You believed in a bad oracle, King sister. Your *ngaanga ngoombu* lied to you. Filled your head with wicked gold. You should have called a diviner. Instead you surrounded yourself with women even women have forgotten. Look at him, who you would have as King. He is lower than an it.” (James 511-512)

Fragment 5

This is the last verse of the oriki, sung by a griot summoned by the Inquisitor, who has apparently lived with Tracker when he lived with Mossi and their adopted mingi children in Mitu. Before this, the griot has sung about how Tracker went to the Gangatom to belatedly perform the ritual to become a man, whereby ultimately one is circumcised. Right before this is supposed to happen, Tracker decides that he does no longer feel the need to do this. After this Mossi urges him to deal with another unresolved issue in his life by going to visit his mother. Tracker gives in and his family joins him on this emotional journey. In the verse before the last one, Tracker reunites with his mother and wails.

Hear me now,

I stay in the monkeybread tree ten and nine moons.

*The day I was leaving the children cry,
and Mossi hang his head down low
and even the Wolf Eye said, But why do you leave your home?
But a man like me, we are like the beast,
we must roam,
or we die.
Listen to me now.
The day before I leave,
A black Leopard come to the tree. (James 532)*

Fragment 6

Tracker has gone on a quest for vengeance and has allied with the Aesi and Nyka, who has become the new Ipundulu. The Aesi wishes to find and kill the boy, Tracker wishes to kill the monster Sasabonsam, who has taken the boy again. Tracker seeks vengeance since Sasabonsam has murdered his family, led to them by the boy. Tracker has persuaded Nyka to come because, seeing as the boy used to nurse from the Ipundulu, Nyka will attract him. Tracker has now killed Sasabonsam and also wishes for the boy to be killed, because he is an “abominable, perverted thing”. Earlier, the Aesi has parted ways with Nyka and Tracker to go talk with a woman whose face was covered in kaolin clay. Tracker and Nyka come upon a lake and on the other side are the Leopard, the boy and the kaolin clay woman, who turns out to be Sogolon.

In the part that is skipped in the fragment, Tracker tries to attack Sogolon and the Aesi turns up, splitting the ground open and trapping Sogolon in it up to her neck. Sogolon and the Aesi have words. Meanwhile, Nyka lures the boy to him, wraps him in an embrace, and then destroys both himself and the boy by flying up into the sky and releasing a powerful lightning bolt. Tracker then goes to the Leopard and, knowing that he is dying, pulls the sword out and holds him.

“Edjirim ebib ekuum eching otamangang na ane-iban,” she said. “When darkness falls, one embraces one’s enemy.”

“Did you translate for me or him?”

“You betray what you fight so long for?” Sogolon said.

“Look at you, Moon Witch. You don’t even look three hundred years old. But then, *gunnugun*

ki ku leve. How did you survive going back through that door?”

“You betraying that what you long fight for,” she said again.

“You talking to me or the Leopard?” I asked.

He looked straight at me. Sogolon and the boy were at the edge of the water and even in the dimness I saw their reflections. The boy looked like the boy, the torch rounding out his large head. Sogolon looked like a shadow. No kaolin clay, and blacker than dark everywhere, even her head, which had neither feathers nor hair.

“Ay, Leopard, is there no one left? No one for you to fail?” I asked.

He said nothing, but pulled his sword. I kept looking at the black figure in the water, the torch in her hand. The water was still and calm and dark blue as coming night. In the reflection I saw the Leopard run for the child. I looked up just as he swung the sword for the little boy’s head. Sogolon did not even turn, but whipped up a hard wind in a blink, which knocked over the Leopard, threw him up in the air, and slammed him against a tree. And right behind him, his sword, kicked up in the air by the wind, went straight like a bolt into his chest and pinned him to the trunk. His head slumped. [...]

“Should never have come for you. Should never have taken you out of your tree,” he said, coughing.

“You came for me because you knew I would go. Here is truth. I was in love and I was in boredom, both at the same time, two rulers in the same house. I was going mad.”

“I made you leave. Remember what I said? *Nkita ghara igbo uja a guo ya aba ozo.*”

“If a wolf refuses to howl, people will give it another name.”

“I lied. It was if a dog refuses to bark.”

I laughed while he tried to.

“I left because I wanted to.”

“But I knew you would. In Fasisi when they asked, How will you find this man? He ... has been dead twenty moons. I said ... I said—” He coughed. “I said, I know a tracker, he could never resist good sport. He says he works for the coin, but the work is his pay though he will never admit it.”

“I should not have left,” I said.

“No, you should not have. What lives we lead. Remorse for what we should not have done, regret for what we should. I miss being a leopard, Tracker. I miss never knowing should.”

“And now you are dying.”

“Leopards do not know of death. They never think of it, because it is nothing to think of. Why do we do this, Tracker? Why do we think of nothing?”

“I don’t know. Because we have to believe in something.” “A man I knew said he didn’t believe in belief.” He laughed and coughed.

“A man I knew said nobody loves no one.”

“Both of them only fools. Only f . . .”

His head fell back in my arms.

Give them no peace, cat. Find sport in the underworld and shame its lords, I thought but did not say. He was the first man I could say I loved, though he was not the first man I would say it to.

I wondered if I would ever stop to think of these years, and I knew I would not, for I would try to find sense, or story, or even a reason for everything, the way I hear them in great stories. Tales about ambition and missions, when we did nothing but try to find a boy, for a reason that turned false, for people who turned false.

Maybe this was how all stories end, the ones with true women and men, true bodies falling into wounding and death, and with real blood spilled. And maybe this is why the great stories we told are so different. Because we tell stories to live, and that sort of story needs a purpose, so that sort of story must be a lie. Because at the end of a true story, there is nothing but waste. (James 614-619)

Appendix B:
Southern Griot Song

I it is who is speaking

I am a southern griot

We now few we was once all

Hide in dark I come out of

The wilderness, I come out of

The cave, I come out and see

I was looking for

A lover

I want get

A lover

I did lose

Another

I want get

Time make every man a widow

And every woman too

Inside him

Black like him

Black that suck through the hole in the world

And the biggest hole in the world

Be the hole of loneliness

The man lose him soul give it 'way

For he was looking for

A lover

He want get

A lover

He did lose

Another

He want get

A man when he eat like glutton

Look like a man when he starve

Tell me can you tell one from two

You glutting by day

Then you starving by night, yeah

Look at you, fooling you

You want find

A lover

You want get

A lover

You did lose

Another

You did lose

A lover

You did lose

A lover

You did lose

Another

You did lose (James 396-398)

Appendix C:

The Oriki

*Thunder god mystic brother
blessed with tongue, and the gift of kora.
It is I, Ikede, son of Akede,
I was the griot that lived in the monkeybread tree.
I been walking many days and many nights, when
across it I come,
the tree near a river
I climb up and hear the parrot, and the crow, and the
baboon
I hear children
laughing, screaming, fighting, making gods hush
and there up top lie a man on a rug.
What kind of man is this?
not like any man in Weme Witu, Omororo, or even
Mitu.
And he said,
are you looking for beauty?
I said I think I found it
And bark, the man laugh and he say
the women of Mitu find me so ugly,
when I take the children to the markets they say
Look at that ugly family, look at those wretched
beasts,
but that one kbhita, ngoombu, haamba be have hair
like a horse.
But I say, beautiful wise bountiful women*

*plump in bosom and wide in smile
I am not a zombi, I am pretty like kaolin clay
and they laugh so hard, they give me doro beer and
play in my hair
and I tell you, in none of these things I find any
offense.
And I say to him
This tree, do you live in it?
He say, There is no you, only we and we are a strange
house.
Stay with us as long as you wish.
When I climb through a hole and sit in the spot
I see he coming, bringing back meat
I say, Who is the man so sour with the eye of a wolf?
Who curse him so?
But children little, children big, children who is but air
run down the tree and stampede him
and don't care that he cursing would scare the owl.
And they jump up on him and sit on his head, and
rest under his arm
And I thinking these children have big feelings for this
man,
and the sour face gone.
And the Wolf Eye climb up the top and stop when he
see me,
and keep climbing.*

*And when he reach the top, he see the other man,
and they put lips together, and open their mouths,
I know.*

*The one with the wolf eye, he is the one
who says, The night is getting old, why are you not
sleeping?*

*The sun is in the sky, why are you not waking?
Food is ready
when are you going to eat it?
Did the gods curse me and make me a mother?
No he blessed me and made you my wife,
the one called Mossi say,
and the children laugh, and the Wolf Eye scowl
And scowl, and scowl, and scowl into a laugh.
I was there, I see it.*

*And I see it when they chase all the children out and
say go,
go to the river now,
and stay 'til the sun start to shift
And when they all gone, they think I gone too
For Mossi speak the Wolf Eye own tongue
Se ge yi ye do bo, he say
Se ge yi ye do bo
Let us love each other
For they two, they grab each other and kiss lip
then kiss tongue,
then kiss neck and nipple
and lower.
And one was the woman, and one was the man,
and both was the woman, and both was the man,
and neither was neither.*

*And the Wolf Eye, he rest his head in Mossi lap.
Mossi, he be rubbing the Wolf Eye's chest.
They just stay there looking at each other,
eye studying eye.*

*Face at rest
maybe they sharing a dream.*

*One day Wolf Eye call them all together.
Children, he say, come out from the river
and present yourselves
you not raised by the jackal or the hyena.
And each child present me his name,
but their names I have all forgotten.*

This is what Wolf Eye say.

*He say, Mossi I am Ku,
and a Ku man can only be one kind of man
and Mossi said to him, How are you not a man
what do I grab between the legs*

Mossi make joke

Wolf Eye not making joke.

He say

*I been running, I been hiding, I been looking for
something that I don't know, but I know I looking for*

it

*And I don't know, but every Ku find it
but there is blood between me and the Ku
and I could never go back.*

So he call the Gangatom

*And the Gangatom chief say, Nobody ever wait so
long,*

I've been waiting all my life, Wolf Eye say.

And Wolf Eye pull his tunic and say,

Look at me, look where there is woman,
And when I cut it off I will be a man
and Mossi he catch a fright, for he think if this is
what make him love him,
But Wolf Eye say, Everything between me and you,
eastern man, is not down there, but up here,
he say and point to his heart.
And the chief say,
What you asking for not old,
what you asking for new.
You is Ku
and you have no father.
In this way you enrage the gods.
Says the Wolf Eye:
The ceremony to become a man
is in praise of the gods, and so
how could any god be mad.
So Wolf Eye,
The Gangatom prick the cow and spill the blood
in a bowl
Wolf Eye drink one then two
he drink and wipe his mouth.
The next day come,
For him to jump the bulls.
They line them up, twenty strong
plus ten more for he take too late to be a man
You have to run on the backs of bulls and you cannot
fall,
For if you fall, the gods laugh
So Wolf Eye,
He naked in oil and shea butter.

Then praise the gods, he run
bull back to bull back, one two three four
five six seven more.
And the people cheer and rejoice
The elder say all these moons you in the in-between
place
and there is no shame,
but middle is nowhere.
But some of the elders, they say
he not coming from the enki paata.
He not been wandering for four moons
as a boy supposed to do before he become man
where on him be the mark that he kill the great lion?
And the chief, he say, Look on him
and you see the mark of him killing lion and
everything else.
So the elders, they sit quiet, though some still grumble,
and the chief, he say to Wolf Eye
You never wander for four moons
So stay for four nights
in the open and with the cows, sleep in grass, stand on
dirt.
And on the five morning
they come for him
and they bathe him from the bucket, with an ax head
in it
to cool the water
And now as be the custom, the men say,
big man fitting in boy skin
to become a man, but look he is a fool.
As be the custom, the men say,

*look at him little boy kehkeh, it not ready to be a
man yet.*
He can't work a woman koo, better he dig an anthole.
As be the custom, the men say.
Is that why you have husband and not a wife?
Is you the wife?
Strength now, Wolf Eye. Anger is weakness.
So in come the cutter ready for the event
sharp with one knife
the Wolf Eye, he have no mother,
so the chief wife, she be the mother.
She send ox hide for him to sit on
and that way not shame the gods.
They lead him, yes they lead him
past the cattle kraal
past the houses of great elder
up to a little hill where on top is a hut
and he say
Kick the knife, and we will kill you.
Run from the knife
And we disown you
The grand cutter, he take chalk and mark a line
from forehead to nose.
The grand cutter, he take milk and pour all over the
Wolf Eye.
The grand cutter, he grab the slain and pull, and pull
he say, One cut!
Kick the knife and we will kill you.
Run from the knife and we will disown you.
He say, One cut!
And the Wolf Eye, he grab the cutter arm

and he say, No.
Listen to me, he say No.
The man in the mountain and the women in the river
hear a whisper that drop like thunder
and everybody quiet.
The Wolf Eye say, The sum of my days
is all about cutting the woman out
Cut her out of me
cut her out of my mother
cut her out of all who walk and carry the world
And he look down at him maleness
crowned at the top by femaleness
and say
What in this make wrong,
how is this not the will of the gods
and if it's not the will of the gods
then it is the will of me
he look at Mossi and say
You tell me I cut all woman out
from my mother to whoever pass the house
when it is I who leave my mother
and I who would now cut away my own self
and with this he get up
and with this he leave the knife
and he walk away
and the people silent for he still a fierce man
But Mossi trouble him more
Soon as they come back to the tree
this he say,
Stop thinking you have peace
you know what I mean

and Wolf Eye say he don't know. So stop
and Mossi say, Why tell me stop if you don't know
And in this way Mossi nag Tracker
And nag and nag and boy he nag
and Tracker raise his hand to strike Mossi
and Mossi say, Nobody has ever loved you finer
but lay that hand on me and you will see it cut off
and shoved in your mouth.
Fine, Tracker say, I will go
just to stop you from being the cockatoo.

And the day come when he turn to go
And he stagger, and he fall, and he say
Come with me or I will fall in the bush
And Mossi go, and the children go
and even me go for Tracker say, Don't act as if you
don't belong to this house
And in this way
Tracker and his kin set off for his mother
What a sight we must be in Juba!
But that is not the story
For Tracker stagger ten times before we get to the gate.
And Mossi hold him up ten times strong
So they get to the door
and a girl open the door who look like him
that is what me and Mossi think
And she don't say nothing, but she let them in
and jump out of the way when the Ball Boy
roll through, and the Giraffe Boy had to duck
and in a blue room

she sit
looking old and weak but her eyes look young
When did he die? Tracker ask.
When a grandfather was supposed to die, she say.
And he look at her like he have something to say
And his mouth quiver like he have something to say
And Mossi start to move we out of the room
like he have something to say
But Tracker stagger again and this time he fall
And she stoop down and touch his cheek
One of your eyes didn't come from me, she say
and what come out his mouth was a wail
And he wail for his mother
And he wail for his mother
And night come for day
And day come for night
And still be wail.

Hear me now,
I stay in the monkeybread tree ten and nine moons.
The day I was leaving the children cry,
and Mossi hang his head down low
and even the Wolf Eye said, But why do you leave
your home?
But a man like me, we are like the beast,
we must roam,
or we die.
Listen to me now.
The day before I leave,
A black Leopard come to the tree. (James 524-532)

Appendix D:

Epigraphic Proverbs and their Storytel Translation

1. A dog, a cat, a wolf and a fox

Bi oju ri enu a pamo. (Not everything the eye sees should be spoken by the mouth.)

2. Malakin

Gaba kura baya siyaki. (Forward is a hyena and backward is a fox.)

3. One child more than six

Ngase ana garkusa ura a dan garkusa inshamu ni. (If one hides fire he or she cannot hide its smoke.)

4. White science and black math

Se peto ndwabwe pat urfo. (Everything that enters the net is a fish.)

5. Here is one Oriki

O niŋe oŋuŋa. Idi ti o n bikita niŋa anŋon iranŋo. (He loves the moon. Why are you caring about the stars.)

6. Death wolf

Mun be kini nuyi a lo bwa. (You brought weeping into the house of death.)

Appendix E: Research African Languages

Since I was curious about which African languages James has used exactly for the non-English phrases and words, I decided to do some research myself. James has not really provided specific information about this, neither in the novel or its paratexts, nor in interviews. During my second reading, I had written down the African words and phrases that occur in the novel, so as to get an idea of how frequent James makes use of them, and in what ways. Initially, I tried several online translation tools to get an indication of the languages that might have been used, but those were often not very reliable. After this, I started to reach out to people speaking languages that I suspected might have been used, based on some offhand remarks by James in interviews, as well as by the results of the translation tools and by simply focusing on more widely spoken languages first. Sometimes I also tried to search online for specific words or phrases, to see if that would shed some light on their origin. In reaching out to speakers of African languages, the focus lay mostly on phrases and less on loose words. Especially in cases in which James did not clearly provide a translation in the text, it is harder to get an indication of the meaning of phrases, and since he often uses proverbs, it is not only interesting to know what the phrase says, but also what it actually means. All in all, it was a very slow and time-consuming process, and more often than not, people replied that their languages were not used in the phrases I sent them. I also tried to contact James himself, by sending him an email, both via his agent and his university email address, but unfortunately I never received a reply. I did not necessarily expect to, but thought it wise to at least try.

In the end, I have only been able to find four languages that have been used for certain phrases, so that the languages of many of the phrases are still unknown to me. The languages that

have been identified are Yoruba, Hausa, Swahili, and Igbo. The list of languages that, according to fluent speakers, have not been used is much longer and includes, for example: Zulu, Xhosa, Wolof, Twi, Omoro, Amharic, Kikongo, Fon, Lingala, Fula, Luganda and Kinyarwanda. Yoruba is used for the first and fifth epigraph, and the second epigraph is in Hausa. One other phrase, which is used in fragment six, is identified as Yoruba. Swahili is used once, for an incantation of Sangoma. Igbo is also used once, this phrase also occurs in fragment six and is uttered by the Leopard, who also provides a translation. Besides one of the epigraphs, five other phrases have been identified as Hausa. Three of them are uttered by Tracker, one by Sangoma and one by a minor character. Furthermore, information has been found about some of the words and phrases uttered by the Aesi in fragment four. The exact language that is used is unknown, but it is likely a language used by the Yaka people, since the sources that shed some light on the relevant words are often about the Yaka.

An interesting issue that has come up through this research, is that James does not always seem to have written the phrases in a correct manner. Some people have pointed out that small spelling or grammar mistakes have been made, or that diacritics have been left out. James has done extensive research over a long period of time, using many resources and covering many different themes. It is quite unlikely that he himself is fluent in all the languages he has used; rather he will have done research on them and implemented them in his work in this way. However, it seems that his use of such phrases has not always been thoroughly checked by native speakers. Of course, many, if not most readers will never notice such small mistakes, through the fact that they simply do not speak all those languages. Nevertheless, I found it a remarkable discovery, worthy of mention. It would be very interesting to find out more about the way in which James has worked in his own research on languages, the exact languages that have been used, and why he chose to use certain languages.

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