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Intercultural engagement and inherent difficulties: Examining translation and transfer of cultural concepts and idioms in Femi Adedina's *Highway to Nowhere*

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ABSTRACT

Writing as an L2 English language writer for L1 English language readers and trying to convey concepts and elements of an indigenous language to them have challenges. The challenges include perception, beliefs and cultural understanding. Many writers try to tackle these challenges through many means such as substitution, transliteration and the use of glossaries. This article centres on the challenges faced by an L2 English language writer trying to convey Yoruba concepts and culture in his novel, Highway to Nowhere, to non-Yoruba speakers and L1 English speakers. These challenges include misconception of ideas and concepts about women and the non-understanding of Yoruba language, Yoruba's culture's ideas of respect and some other ideas embedded in the culture. This article explains the tools the writer used such as footnotes, epitaphs and folktales, and it also explores the ways the writer handles cultural and perceptual difficulties that are encountered by his L1 English language reader. The paper then concludes that, a glossary could have been better than footnotes and that there are differences in cultural perceptions and world views of both the writer and his readers. It then suggests that the use of new media with its potential of multimedia presentations would be a better means of transferring cultural concepts without losing most of what the concept contains.

"The agony it was to switch from Russian to English... not only style but subject undergoes a horrible bleeding and distortion when translated into another tongue" – Vladimir Nabokov

"Nobody who attempts to translate Yorùbá into English will doubt that 'poetry is what is left out of translation' "– Ulli Beier

Keywords: *Translation, Cultural Perception, Yoruba Concepts, Glossary, Multimedia.*

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Introduction

Writing a novel in English for the creative component of a Ph.D gave an insight into transcultural communication problems. The crux of the novel is a true Nigerian story which centres on a Nigerian Pentecostal pastor who after his death was found to be bigamous and corrupt. His first wife, feeling cheated and deceived, wrote a petition to the Nigeria's Corrupt Crimes Commission (EFCC), which investigated and confiscated the pastor's property. The novel is narrated from viewpoints of characters surrounding the pastor like friends, aunt, accountant, banker, etc. These people's stories gave an insight and painted the pastor's montage for us. The writer as a Yorùbá from Nigeria's South-western region where the novel is set, has English as a second language. This placed him at a crossroad while trying to transfer idioms, ideas, and cultural concepts from his culture into English. Communicating across cultures and between cultures creates difficulties in meanings, symbols and understanding. The reason; culture plays vital role in what an individual is and how he or she communicates since culture, as defined by [1] cited in [2], is:

> The sum total of a people's way of life consisting of values, beliefs, and perceptions of the world that underlie a people's behaviour and which are shared by members of a particular society and it contributes to the way they perceive society and it contributes to the way they perceive themselves as well as others. It is that aspect of our existence that makes us similar to some people, yet different from other peoples of the world.

Adefuye's definition implies that culture is the totality of a people's lifestyle. The implication being that the individual is largely influenced and affected by culture. This, however, isn't so because there are other factors like personality, intellect, education, social and economic etc. that could influence how the individual sees himself/herself and other people. This in turn brings out the similarities between an individual and those different from him/her. The explanation offered in Cultural Dialogue [3] supports this definition when he avers that 'communication and culture are so closely bound together in such a way that virtually all human social interaction is culturally linked'. Prosser means there is a relationship between culture and communication that cannot be separated. As the basic communication model clarifies, in every communication encounter, participants come with their experiences, culture, skills, opinions, attitudes, values, needs and existing knowledge. All these impinge on our communication interaction and issues of meanings, signs, language and other communication tools. Prosser points out that, 'we carry our cultural baggage with us and cannot isolate

ourselves from our cultural roots', which means that separating our beings from culture is impossibility.

Our culture, therefore, affects transcultural communication and the transfer processes of cultural idioms. An example will suffice here. If a Yorùbá person wakes up in a British or Australian home and kneels (if female) or prostrates (if male) in the morning to greet elders in the house, the Britons or Australians will be confused and wonder what the Yorùbá person is doing. The Yorùbá person, however, is following his/her cultural instinct that one prostrates or kneels to greet elderly people at any time of greeting. The above example is bound to be misunderstood by those who do not share same culture nor versed in Yorùbá culture. Exchanging explanations and meanings related to the act will therefore bring about appreciation and understanding. An absence of such exchanges may result in the act not being understood because different perceptions and cultural idioms create transcultural communication difficulties.

The novel, Highway to Nowhere, is an example of a cultural exchange. Written outside Yorùbá culture, there were difficulties encountered when transferring Yorùbá cultural idioms and concepts into a non-Yorùbá cultural climate. The difficulties were in language, perception, beliefs and culture and they were interrelated and intertwined. In order to foster intercultural and transcultural understanding in this cultural encounter, footnotes were used. Footnotes, however, can be 'intrusive or distractive to a reader' [5] and forty-five in a novel is too many. Why such a large number of footnotes in Highway to Nowhere? This paper attempts to answer this question by examining both the difficulties faced in this cultural exchange and the use of footnoting as a means of negotiating the transfer of indigenous thoughts into another language. It then discusses constraints faced in this negotiation and actions taken to overcome them.

Language Difficulties

Culture and communication are intertwined since culture not only governs communicators and the content and processes of communication, but also shapes the encoding of people's messages, the meanings, the communication environment in relation to messages being sent, and the interpretation of the message. Culture is communication's foundation [6]. Cultures, then, 'embed[s] meanings which language reflects' [7] and transfers during communication. Language serves as a vehicle for cultural transmission since 'any language has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture' [8]. When a language encounters

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another language, exchanges of influence occur and a variant of the second language develops. There is a claim that:

> The theoretical pivot of the phenomenon that produced the new Englishes is that of language variation and change. Uriel Weinreich (who could be rightly regarded as the "father" of modern- day contact linguistics) presented a systematic framework for the categorization of the mutual influence and "mixing" that takes place when languages come in contact (1953, 1968). [9]

This claim explains Nigerian English's (NE) existence, something that many linguists have written or attempted to explain (e.g. Bamgbose 1982; Adekunle 1985, p.36, 38; Adegbija 1989 p. 165-177; Atoye 1991 p.1-6; Bamiro 1991 275-286, 1994; Goke-Pariola 1993 p.219-234 and Ajani 1994 p.34-48, 2001, 2005 p.1-23 and 2007). However, [10] proposes the rationale for the NE variety as resulting from the fact that:

> the English language has, as a result of many years of active use in the Nigerian speech community … becomes part of Nigeria's contemporary environment and behaviour. It is an artefact whose foreign derived components have in the process of its evolution combined with native Nigerian elements to make it local.

The rationale for NE is not unique since 'in language contact situations a second language (L2) is bound to be influenced by its linguistic environment' [11]. As a Yorùbá student writing in English, there were instances of syntax transfer, diction appropriation and second language interference in the novel. These can be illustrated with the following examples. The novel's opening sentence, 'My father, a Reverend, like his father, a storyteller' could be rendered in English as, 'My father, a Reverend, like my grandfather was a storyteller'. The first sentence is an almost a literal translation of Yorùbá sentence structure into English. The Yorùbá sentence would have been written as, 'Bàbá mi, àlúfà, bí bàbá rè jé asòtàn'. Repetition of the word 'bàbá' in the Yorùbá sentence is because Yorùbá language does not have a single word that approximates to the English word 'grandfather'. Instead there is a phrase 'baba bàbá mi' which translates into 'my father's father' or 'the father of my father'.

Diction in terms of word choice was also a problem while writing the novel. Deciding on the appropriate word to capture Pastor Jude's father's and grandfather's functions in the novel's first sentence was difficult because of the variety of words expressing the type of functions the writer had in mind for them as community wise men. The following Yorùbá words connote someone who tells stories or whose roles include storytelling. The words are: òpìtàn, asòtàn, akígbe, apàló, asunrárà, akéjalá and akéwì. These words could be translated as òpìtàn - historian, asòtàn -storyteller, akígbe- chanter, herald, apàló – raconteur/storyteller or one who

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tells stories and riddles during moonlight periods, asunrárà - a chanter of a particular oral poetry of the Yorùbá in Nigeria's Central region called rara, akéjalá - a chanter of Yorùbá hunters' traditional oral poetry and akéwì - a traditional poet. Each of the words includes storytelling functions in how they perform their poetry. The use of asòtàn - "storyteller" in the novel, (which in English language can also mean a gossip or a liar) was an unconscious attempt at separating and particularising Pastor Jude's father's and grandfather's roles and expertise in their community. The writer could have used the word 'griot', but while it totally captures their roles, he substituted it with asotan, storyteller, because that matches what they would be called in Yorùbá culture.

Another example is in second language interference most especially at the level of grammar and syntax . A reader can attest to some recurrent mistakes on some tense structures in the writing. There are not as many tenses in Yorùbá tenses as in English (Table 1).

Table 1: Comparison of tense structures in Yoruba and English

Yorùbá	**Tense**	**English**	**Tense**
O sele lana	*Past*	It *happened* yesterday	Past
O sele l'oni	*Present Tense*	It *happens* today	Present
O n sele lowolowo bayi	*Present Tense*	It *is happening* right now	Present Continuous
O ti sele tipe tipe	*Past Tense*	It *has happened* long ago	Past Perfect
Yoo sele l'ola	*Future Tense*	It *will happen* tomorrow	Future Tense

The underlined word in the Yorùbá sentences is the verb. While the English verbs have suffixes like –ed, -s, and occur in phrases like 'is happening', 'has happened' and 'will happen', the Yorùbá verb is only a single word 'sele', meaning happen. Time signifying when the action took place is marked by a separate word; 'L'ana'- yesterday, l'oni- today, 'lowolowo bayi'- this moment, 'tipetipe'- long time ago and 'l'ola'- tomorrow. These are some of the difficulties the writer faced in writing the novel *Highway to Nowhere* as a result of the differences in his thinking and creating in –Yorùbá – and his writing in – English.

Cultural and Perceptual Difficulties

Every culture has its mores, norms, beliefs and outlooks on life and existence. Each culture also differs in its reality, objects and human perceptions. Cultural markers affect the recognition of understandings and meanings within a particular culture. In Yorùbá culture for instance Ògá is someone in authority and someone higher in hierarchy than the caller. When a Yorùbá

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person calls an individual Ògá, it does not translate to the person being referred to being the caller's immediate boss. The title reflects the caller's respect for the person addressed. In an Australian or British context, however, Ògá (boss) may not be as meaningful because these two cultures seem to deemphasize language or words reflecting hierarchical relationships at work places. These cultures try to promote equity, hence, the first name exchange between bosses and their subordinates in both cultures.

Nevertheless, this is not to say that Yorùbá society is based on injustice and inequity. It is only that there is a respect ingrained in Yorùbá culture and seniority in age, position and power matters within, and is highly recognised in, the Yorùbá society. Resorting to the type of equity practised in an Australian or British society in Yorùbá or Nigerian settings is termed an abnormal act and a sign of disrespect. This respect, however, is not the slavish kind because the Yorùbás allow an irresponsible Ògá or boss to be disgraced; hence, there are Yorùbá proverbs cautioning elders or those in authority not to misbehave. The proverbs include 'Àgbàlagbà kí n se lángbá- lángbá' (An elderly person does not behave frivolously) and "Àgbàlàgbà tó so yangan mo 'di ló so ra rè d'aláràfin adìye" (The elderly person who tied a corn to his buttocks turns him/herself into a source of fun and shame for a chicken). The transfer of meanings in power relations becomes problematic the moment one crosses the cultural lines.

Another example of the difficulties faced in intercultural transfer is the position and perception of women within Anglo-Australian and Yorùbá societies in relation to women characters created in Highway to Nowhere. Many women feel oppressed throughout the world, a fact that [12] buttresses: 'violence against women is global in reach and takes place in all societies and cultures. It affects women no matter what their race, ethnicity, social origin, birth or other status may be'. However, examining Africa's underdevelopment, one could say African women and particularly Yorùbá women are thought to be more oppressed than their Western counterparts. The truth of this statement is relative, but as Femi Osofisan, a Nigerian playwright, poet and writer, explains in a recent interview conducted by [13] oppression and injustice go beyond gender lines.

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QUESTION: Going by your rapport with the many women in your plays especially the high pedestals on which you place them, why do you have great expectations that women are agents of change? (Tegonni, Morountodun, Women of Owu etc).

ANSWER: Again, the same thing. Some women, [note that I say, SOME women], are like this: courageous, daring, outspoken, and willing to fight for change, for liberation from oppression, whether of the broadly political, or the narrowly patriarchal type (sometimes both are the same thing anyway!). Perhaps I give them a particular emphasis in my works, but that is simply because in previous works I noticed that such women are rarely portrayed, or kept in the shadows, while the male heroes take all the limelight. That for me is not right. Such a picture distorts history; it presents only a partial truth; it can give the women who read such works a false model of social and political passivity which is completely at variance with what we know for instance of women activists in Yorùbá society.

Notwithstanding, some of Osofisan's submissions, justice and fairness is strongly biased against women since Yoruba world and society may be taken to be highly male dominated and patriarchal. This is not to say that there are no matriarchal, matrilineal or matrifocal communities or societies in the world. There are, and [14] lists them as including:

The Mosuo, Yao, Miao and Tan peoples in China, the Chiang people of Tibet, the Minang Kabauof Sumatra, the Ainu of Japan, the Trobianders of Melanesia in the Pacific, the Khesi, Garo and Nayar of India, the Bantu, Akan and Ashanti peoples in Africa, the Berbers and Tuareg of North Africa, the Arawak peoples of South America, the Cuna and Juchitamians of Central America, the Hopi and Puebo peoples as well as the Iroquois peoples of North America.

These matriarchal, matrilineal or matrifocal societies are exceptions to the rule. The Yorùbá society while patriarchal with its inherent power structure discriminating against women, does however, still venerate women. Women play important roles in Yorùbá homes and communities. Yorùbá proverbs and songs capture this importance:

a. Ìyá ni wúrà, baba ni jígí,
Ijó tí ìyá bá kú ni wúrà omo bàjé
(Mother is gold, father a mirror,
The day the mother dies is the day
the child's gold is destroyed)

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b. Iya ni wura iyebiye

Ti a ko le f'owo ra'

O 'loyun mi f'osu mesan

O pon mi f'odun meta

Iya ni wura iyebiye

Ti a ko le f'owo ra

(Mother is a precious gold

That cannot be purchased with money

She carried me in her womb for nine months

She nursed me for three years

Mother is precious gold

That cannot be purchased with money)

The first, a proverb, compares a mother to gold and a father to a mirror (that is a model). The importance and symbolism of the two objects and their qualities reflect Yorùbá women's role and importance. The second is a song that reveres women and praises their sacrifices inherent in motherhood. As [15] opines, 'the way mother is revered in Yorùbá culture (italics added) makes most women look forward to motherhood as she is even deified thus:

Orisa bi iya ko si

Iya la ba ma bo

(There is no deity like mother

It is the mother that is worthy of

being worshipped)'

However, despite revering and worshipping women, the Yorùbá society and culture oppress them as 'there are elements of oppression in some of the Yorùbá proverbs that relate to women … and these proverbs violate the rights and dignity of women, indicating discrimination against women in Yorùbá culture' [16].

Women's position in Yorùbá culture starts from home but transcends it. Memberships in any Yorùbá compound – Agbole – are in two categories, membership by birth and acquired membership which may be through marriage or short time visiting. Membership by birth within the compound are called Omo-Ile (Omole) – children of the compound or house while acquired

membership referred to as Ara-Ile. Among the Omole, the most important person in the home is the Ìya Àgbà the oldest female in a house (Ilé) or compound (Agbolé). She is a repository of the home's traditions and history and at the same time the mother of the house. Her opinions matter and nothing is ever decided without her input. In almost all cases, her decisions are final. The Baale (Baba Ile) father of the House or Compound is the oldest male in the family and discusses with her decisions concerning the compound or home's welfare. She settles disputes and cares for all the children in the house or compound. This is not affected by her ability to have children. In the traditional Yorùbá setting, anyone who refers to or makes fun of her for being barren is highly chastised.

Among the females not born in the compound are the compound's wives. They are Omole in their own compounds and decisions are not taken in their parents' compounds without their contribution being sought, even though live in their husbands' houses. In the compound where they are wives, they are called Iyawo-Ile and the oldest wife in the compound is called Iya-Ile or Iyale. Most children of the house or compound stay in her house, compound or room and she sees to their feeding and welfare with input from the men in the compound. She also controls and manages the women's affairs within the families, both nuclear and extended, as well as the various compounds the families inhabit. She is actively involved and controls the compound's ceremonial activities – such as burials, marriages, or naming ceremonies – with the help of all the junior wives. (See Matory 428)

Also, in Yorùbá culture, women are so powerful that they can and do dethrone kings. One well known story was that of late Fúnmiláyò Ransome Kuti, the late popular musician Fela Anikulapo Kuti's mother, and Wole Soyinka, the Nobel laureate's, Aunt, who, with Egba women, deposed an Alake of Abeokuta in Nigeria South West. (Johnson-Odim and Mba 1997 Sklar, 2004 Mama and Barnes 2007 1 & Adeniyi 2009). When there are irresolvable conflicts within the Yoruba community women are turned to for solutions. During such periods,women parading naked, half naked or fully clothed through the town and community as a form of protest are taken to be a curse on the society and community. The traditional Yorùbá society will do anything to avoid this. This is the same in Ibo society, the Itsekiris in Nigeria's Niger Delta and among Cameroon's Kom people (Ritzenthaler 151 Ukeje 605-17 Goheen 2000 and Turner and Brownhill 63-93). Fictional works written by Yorùbá individuals, for example, depict women's powerful roles. Soyinka uses the Iyas in Madmen and Specialists and the powerful Ìyálójà's role in Death and the King's Horseman. Osofisan depicted Tegonni and her

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group in Tegonni and Titubi and Moremi in Morountodun while Akinwunmi Isola wrote Yorùbá plays titled Efunsetan Aniwura, and Tinubu. The first based on the story of the powerful Iyalode of Ibadan, and the second on another powerful Egba Iyalode in the colonial times.

The roles and positions of these important women within the Yoruba society is underpinned by what [17], quoting [18] excerpt from an Odu Ifa, states that:

> O ni gbogbo ohun ti enia ba n se
>
> Ti ko ba fi ti obinrin kun un
>
> O ni ko le seese…
>
> O ni ki won o ma fi iba fun obinrin
>
> O ni ti won ba ti fi iba fun obinrin
>
> Ile aye yio ma toro
>
> The deity Ifa (italics mine) says in anything we do,
>
> If we do not guarantee the place of women
>
> That thing will not succeed
>
> He said, 'we should acknowledge the power of women'
>
> He said, 'if we acknowledge their power
>
> The world will be peaceful'

Highway to Nowhere used epitaphs and folktales as explanatory tools. In one of the epitaphs, a Yorùbá proverb, ' Bi ewe ba pe l'ara ose a d'ose, b'obinrin ba pe n'ile oko a d'aje (When the soap wrapping leaf stays too long with the soap, it becomes soap, when a woman stays too long in her husband's house she becomes a witch) impressed my supervisor as being unusual in its meaning. Though, there was no footnote for this, explanations of the proverb's varied meanings had to be made that a woman married for a long time to a man becomes so familiar with him that relations and onlookers will term her a witch because of her ability to predict her husband's actions, behaviour or idiosyncrasies. The same situation occurs on the hawk and the duck's folktale I used in explaining Funmilayo's final act in the novel:

> Walking out of the meeting room, I heard one of the family members telling others that there was no more problem because I had shown my reactions. The person said that what would have been problematic was my keeping quiet and not saying anything. He reminded them of the duck, the hen and the hawk's story. (*Highway to Nowhere* 280)

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There were queries about the relevance of the tale to my novel. The tale differentiates between a loud and a silent person. The loud or the talking person is predictable while the quiet or silent person is unpredictable. One is unable to decipher a silent or quiet person's mind. Fúnmiláyò's silence and behind the scene actions were unknown to her husband and her husband's relations and this made it impossible for her to be checkmated.

Landmines in Translation and Transfer

Highway to Nowhere typifies Yorùbá culture although it is written for both Yorùbá and non-Yorùbá readers. Efforts were made to limit the number of cultural references but many were pertinent to the novel. The challenges in using them, however, was in being able to translate to a non-Yorùbá in a way that the reader will understand the embedded meanings in these cultural practices. In writing this novel,that was a big challenge because there are instances where a deeper exploration of these cultural issues will be confusing. An example will suffice here. Footnote 3 – Aisiki – is explained as a person's good fortune as brought or predestined from heaven. However, it means more than this because Aisiki to the Yorùbá s summarises an individual's total essence, and it goes beyond good fortune; it is the person's totality and essence of being. When taken from an individual, the person becomes an empty shell without his/her true essence or, as the Yorùbá s will put it, an Oku Aye, that is, a living dead or walking corpse. It is not only that the Yorùbá s believe each individual comes with his/her essence from heaven, they also believed this can be tampered with, taken from someone or even transferred to another person through occult means and the work of malevolent spiritual entities. Explaining in-depth what Aisiki means entails conceptual challenges and transference gaps. For example, it is possible to write Aisiki's meaning contextually into the novel like:

> The Yorùbá s believe that an individual's good fortune, their Aisiki, is brought from heaven and that it can be stolen or used by other people. Since I was becoming richer and more successful, rumours started circulating that I killed my two husbands in order to use their Aisiki (*Highway to Nowhere* 22)

Though a non-Yorùbá reader will be able to have an understanding of what Aisiki means through the above, the footnote below extends the meaning, thereby deepening the understanding of the word – Aisiki – for non-Yorùbá s, although it is not as comprehensive as the earlier explanation of the term.

> Áísìkí: An individual's good fortune, which the Yorùbás believe, is brought from heaven. They also believe that spirits, witches, wizards or people through medicine or the occult could change a person's aísìkí, and that a person's aísìkí could be stolen or used by other people. Hence the prayer, "k'araye ma

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> pa kadara mi da, ki aye ma lo aísìkí mi. (May human beings not change my destiny, and may they not use my good fortune) (*Highway to Nowhere* 22)

Highway to Nowhere's footnotes exemplified some of the cultural ideas but even in translation many embedded meanings and aspects had to be simplified. The dilemma of what to add or deduct in transferring meanings of cultural acts, ideas and practices must have been baffling for the writer which then placed him on a tight rope walk. He has to juggle between explaining the ordinary meanings of the cultural issues and writing bulky footnotes that will be distracting and intrusive to the readers' enjoyment and understanding of the story he was telling.

Footnotes as Negotiating Tools

How do footnotes transfer cultural ideas? Can they bridge the gap between cultures, meanings and levels of understanding? This paper attempts to answer these questions Footnotes are used as a means to transfer meanings and a tool of clarification. The assumption behind their use is the explanation of what remains unknown to a reader or clarification or exemplification of specific idea/s to a reader. Footnotes in *Highway to Nowhere* are categorised into those explaining meanings of unusual words (02), those based on cultural insight (22), proverbs and wise sayings (04), citations (07), pidgin derived terms (05) and common Nigerian terms the writer assumed should be known to any reader until Supervisor queried them and he had to explain (05). The categorisation explains the fact that the majority of the footnotes were means of explaining Yorùbá cultural concepts to non-Yorùbás. A few examples will clarify this. Footnote Babaláwo is: A traditional medicine man and an Ifa, the Yorùbá god of divination's believer, which means Baba-n-la-awo (A great father of medicine, the occult, cults and arcane knowledge or [lit. 'senior-male-who-owns-the-mystery']) [19]. In English language, this is translated into 'witch-doctor', a term which does injustice to the true meaning of the word babalawo since 'English equivalents like 'sorcerer', 'fetish priest', 'witch-doctor' and 'juju priest' are inadequate to express its meaning. (20). The Babaláwo, however, is a Doctor, physician, psycho-therapist, occultist, priest, diviner, griot, historian, bard, community leader, etc… the closest to a satisfactory equivalent has been the term 'diviner-physician' by Kofi Awoonor but that was only two aspects of the babalawo's complex profile [21]

In the light of Osundare's explanation, the footnote on Babalawo above was not comprehensive enough on the babalawo's qualities and profile. Trying to explain all what the babalawo does according to Osundare in a footnote will disturb the reader's reading flow.

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One of the cultural beliefs used in the novel the writer needed to explain through footnotes 9 and 11 is the summary of the Ese-Ifa (Edi Meji), that unless the person whose akosejaye is divined performs the necessary etutu (rituals and sacrifices), the person will be well known, rich and become important but will die untimely. Yorùbás will ascribe Judes' death in the plane crash in the novel to Judes' father's inability to perform the etutu because of his Christian beliefs. This is a belief understandable to Yorùbá but likely to be confusing to a non-Yorùbá, who will be unable to relate to how the inability or refusal to carry a metaphysical injunction given when a baby is less than two weeks old could lead to the death of the baby now a man, forty-five years later.

However, the decisions on what to footnote and what not to include were determined by the supervisor's queries and the writer's decisions on the extent of what to explain. Tension existed in determining how far he could go when explaining one concept or the other. Footnote 20 – Aransi – for example, is explained in the footnote thus:

> Aransi: Types of Yorùbá occult practice in which words, curses or animals like snakes or other dangerous animals (or in the case of a hunter, mistaking a human being for an animal) is sent to a person through remote means and the person carries out such injunctions without knowing why. This is usually achieved through word of mouth. Asasi is almost like aransi but the difference is that in asasi the person targeted would not realise what is happening until after the event. For example, a man may be called to kill his wife or do harm to his children and he would carry it out without understanding or knowing why and will greatly regret the action when his vision clears.

The explanations above as a footnote to explain just a reference to the concept on page 47 of the novel would have been distracting to the reader. *Highway to Nowhere* is a novel and not a textbook on Yorùbá traditional religion and beliefs. The cultural issues were meant to be side dishes and not the main dish. The Supervisor, because of this, lost some depth of understanding and the writer lost an opportunity of helping her to understand more of the writing's basis. This is what happens in translation and this deprives readers of deeper knowledge.

Intentions and Final Product

The final copy of *Highway to Nowhere* is different to what the writer had in mind. There were some aspects he had to cut off because they may have sounded so fantastical and unbelievable to the primary reader, the Supervisor. The writer was writing a realistic novel and not a magical realist work and there were limits to what sounds realistic to a Yorùbá person and what is fantastical to a non-Yorùbá. Examples of what he has to cut off includes the discussion between Jude's spirit and the guide, which came to ease him into the afterlife; Jude's aunt's discussion

with Iku – Death at his cot in the hospital; and the Akudaya concept that explains Jude's spirit's ability to appear to his loved ones after his death in the plane crash and which the Yorùbá believe will give Pastor Jude another chance to live because he died young and without achieving his destiny.

These would have deepened an understanding of Yorùbá beliefs and culture but they had to be removed because the writer assumed they would be weird and confusing to the supervisor. This absence of background knowledge militated against a robust treatment of some ideas the writer wanted to tackle in the novel. Translation and transfer of ideas to foreign setting and language sometimes stultifies whatever a writer writing for a different setting from his or her background wants to say. What comes through usually is an amalgam or reduced forms. African intellectuals have been expressing concerns over their writings and the challenges they face writing in a foreign language since the formal end of colonial rule Adejunmobi [23] and many writers and critics like Ngugi [24], Achebe [25], Okara [26], Arnove [27] and Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffins [28] also examined the question of the publics for African writing in European languages. The writer's experiences writing *Highway to Nowhere* also raises the same questions. The writing of the novel in a different cultural milieu brings to fore the problem African writers face in translating indigenous ideas into foreign languages. The question, which this situation generates, is: what lessons are learnt and what can writers do to improve this situation?

Conclusion

If *Highway to Nowhere* had been a novel meant for the general public in its present form and not for a doctoral examination, the writer would not have used so many footnotes. Perhaps he would have placed a glossary at the novel's end. The footnotes in the present version came out of comments, questions and need to explain areas that the supervisor deemed unclear and make the explanations easier to access. Firstly, this exercise helped the writer realise the need to find easier ways of transferring cultural concepts to others who are not from the writer's background. Secondly, it shows the differences existing in cultural perceptions and worldviews of different people when they are of differing cultural backgrounds. This in turn makes the writer to think of devising a means of transferring those cultural ideas. The New Media and its multimedia ability of putting visuals, audio and written signals together will be a better medium

than writing only as a means of transferring cultural concepts without losing too much of what the concepts contain.

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