

Bordered Identities in Language, Literature, and Culture

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*Readings on Cameroon
and the Global Space*

Edited by

Mbuh Tenu Mbuh
and Emelda Ngufor Samba

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INTRODUCTION

READING NEW AND OLD BORDERS IN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

MBUH TENNU MBUH
AND EMELDA NGUFOR SAMBA

Introduction

The linguistic and literary landscapes in Cameroon have witnessed significant shifts in appraisal for the last three decades or so; and reflect new and overlapping trends into a twenty-first century world in which a multicultural dialogue is rebranding relative notions of cultural aesthetics. We are referring not just to a refocus on intellectual and political debates that blend language use with creative stimulus and identity imperatives, but also to the advent of the social media where demographics fuse in an increasingly non-differentiating conversation on diverse issues. A crossroads of languages that negotiate relative worldviews, Cameroon is indeed a case study on how multilingualism is opening up new avenues for linguistic and literary attention beyond the immanence of colonial binaries. This volume focuses, in part, on this fertile diversity, to the extent that it interrogates conservative notions of how language negotiates identity, or fails to do so, in a speech act or literary work. Both the negotiation and failure can very well be strategies to maintain the status-quo, or reject it, inasmuch as they reveal an indolent acceptance of prescribed speech forms and their meanings. While Part One is elaborate (because of the significance of language in interpretive acts), and is devoted to linguistic analyses especially of a non-Standard orientation, Part Two focuses on new literary meanings that are insightful to the way cultural tensions are understood and resolved, whether through creative recalcitrance or the simple act of critical revisionism.

The polarised field of practical bilingualism in Cameroon offers a clue to the language analysis in Part One, where complexes clash in a politicised

bid for ascendancy. Paul Biya had commented on the need for Cameroonians to beware of rifts resulting from loyalty to foreign cultures, notably those of the English and the French, insisting that ‘at the start of this [20th] century Cameroonians were neither Anglophones nor Francophones’ (qtd in Konings and Nyamnjoh, *Negotiating an Anglophone Identity* 109). Here, Biya engages us in both a post-independence ‘nation-building’ conversation and in the need to revive pre-colonial indigeneity as a systemic panacea. Highlighting the irony of this imperative, which is continuously being abused, John Nkemngong Nkengasong notes that, ‘[t]he Anglocentric focus of [our] postcolonial status has, ironically, preserved the primacy of English and established both British colonialism and British Literature as a frame of reference’ (‘Interrogating the Union’ 54). Such ambivalence persists, to the extent that the French language has been seen by Anglophones in Cameroon as ‘the language of oppression and repression’ (Konings and Nyamnjoh 56); which has resulted in a new breed of ‘franglophones’ (Nkwetisama 2013) who adopt a purist disposition toward the English language. The failure of Cameroon’s nation-building project is thus attributed to the fact that ‘nationalist feelings’ built on linguistic biases ‘are still rife in Anglophone territory’ (Jua and Konings 2). The analysis here draws on this romance with our colonial heritage as a means to prospect a more enabling linguistic environment.

Such an environment points in part to contradictions in postcolonial resistance to dominant discourses, where sympathies for colonial or indigenous varieties fluctuate depending on whether or not language serves the purpose of empowering its users in what Nkemngong describes as our ‘post-postcolonial cultural experience’ (*A Grammar of Cameroonian Pidgin* 2). Reacting to the debate over the standardisation of English language varieties, which some of the papers here address, Daniel Schreier argues strongly that

anybody interested in the spread of English as a world language must be interested in the evolution, function and diversity of ‘non-standard English’ as well, for descriptive and theoretical reasons. Given the fact that all the post-colonial varieties of English have developed with more or less influential impact of British donor varieties ... a fruitful ... question is how non-standard varieties have developed all over the English-speaking world, and how the transplantation of British English to settings outside the British Isles has given rise to the emergence of ‘new’ varieties, in the form of pidgins, creoles, koinés, etc. How do non-standard varieties come into existence, and how do they vary and change and evolve? And why, in analogy to decreolisation processes ... should the speakers of non-standard

varieties not strive towards standardisation, since their variety is not socially valued? ('Non-Standardisation' 85-86)

It therefore becomes clear that 'non-standard' is no longer synonymous to inferior or even deviant use in language, wherein we consider the strides in coding Cameroon English (CamE) and its complements of Cameroon Pidgin English (CPE) and Mother Tongue (MT). In *The Intelligibility of Native and Non-Native English Speech: A Comparative Analysis of Cameroon English and American and British English*, Atechi hints on this possibility, based on intelligibility between native and non-native speakers 'whereby the participants in the communication act put in equal efforts to make the process a success' (11). It however remains to be seen how this is attested in practical terms.

Othered/Othering (by) Error Analysis

To understand this fluid linguistic environment, we have to go as far back as the 1960s when language research efforts in Cameroon focused on issues related to error analysis notably in terms of deviations from 'the standard'. Mbassi Manga's MPhil thesis at the University of Leeds in 1968 entitled 'The English of the Students at the Federal University of Cameroon: A Study in Error Analysis' highlighted the 'errors' made by students of the Department of English in Manga's alma mater. Miriam Ayafor's 1993 MA dissertation at the University of Leeds entitled 'Falling Standards of English in Cameroon' continued the discussion by attributing a quasi-inferior status to the emergent Cameroonian variety of English; a status which she later re-examined in her 2015 publication, *The Grammar Problem in Higher Education in Cameroon*. In this latter publication, she analyses the grammatical problems manifested in the written works of students of the English Department in the University of Yaounde 1. However, in 'Cameroon English Existence: Evidences from Semantic Extensions in Cameroon Anglophone Drama', Ayafor is more affirmative in analysing semantic extension, which she sub-divides into semantic broadening and/or semantic shifting, in Anglophone Cameroon drama. Her argument, in the latter category, favours the emergence of new words in CamE whose 'new meanings prevail to the point of bringing about the disappearance of earlier [native/'Standard'] meanings' (62). Meanwhile, in *Common Deviations in English in Cameroon*, Augstin Simo Bobda analysed errors Cameroonians make in their English. This and other

works¹ (even with a legitimate claim to pointing out deviant language use) have been attempts to remediate English to reflect and therefore reinforce, consciously or unconsciously, the status of the British norm. Generally, the focus of several researchers has been to describe, condescendingly, CamE, CPE, and the MT, pitting the native context in which these operate(d) against the Standard British English (SBrE). Although these varieties are many times despised, it is important to note that they are now major power brokers in the linguistic identity of the post-independence nation-state, and help us to revise attitudes towards native footprints in any linguistic assessment of Cameroon's multilingualism.

Based on these works, one can state that these scholars largely see CPE and even CamE from the negative perspective of 'impact' rather than a complementary possibility of 'influence'. Given that L1 influence on L2 is a universal linguistic phenomenon, if CPE and CamE are accused of 'destroying' *the English* (that is, the SBrE) of Cameroonians without a corresponding accusation levied on other languages (Lewis 2009:280), then this ceases to be a linguistic issue not just because the accusation is levied mostly by Francophones but also because metalinguistic attitudes from the same consciousness seem to characterise the charge. Bonaventure M. Sala (2013), Mpoche (2013) and Kizitus Mpoche and A. Ngoh (2012) have underscored this point. We therefore contend that while the persistence of research in error analysis today in Cameroon is necessary to highlight cases of deviant language use, it need not be done in a way that inadvertently guarantees an unfair premium to SBrE by presupposing that Cameroonians can, and should use it.

Almost at the same time that Manga was at Leeds, Corder was concerned with errors made by learners. What he referred to as 'adventitious artefacts of linguist performance'—the physical, psychological, and emotional factors that induce errors—provide a context for an understanding of how standards can be challenged today:

It would be quite unreasonable to expect the learner of a second language not to exhibit ... slips of the tongue (or pen), since he is subject to similar external and internal conditions when performing in his first or second language. We must therefore make a distinction between those errors which are the product of such chance circumstances and those which reveal his underlying knowledge of the language to date, or, as we may call it his *transitional competence*. The errors of performance will

¹ See for instance, Augustin Simo Bobda *Watch Your English*; and 'Linguistic Apartheid: English Language Policy in Africa'. *English Today*, 20, 19-26; Jean Paul Kouega, 'Some Features of Suprasegmentals in Cameroon English Speech'.

characteristically be unsystematic and the errors of competence, systematic. (167)

Pioneer language researchers in Cameroon seemed not to have taken advantage of the ‘transitional’ space—which itself implies a movement toward the ‘standard’—mediated in the learning process in order to minimise/customise the stress on ‘error’. With the passage of time, however, new features emerged, and culminated in CamE. In its conscious manifestation, CamE takes the form of *acrolects*, which are ascribed to professionals and their apparent prestige status with a tendency toward hypercorrections; with a gradation in descending order, through *mesolects* to *basolects* that reflects respective blocs of users and their renderings. In some cases, these lectal variations reveal a mixed provenance of utterances, reflective perhaps of both user background and the difficulty of adhering to a particular status. We note, for instance, the confused use of language on Cameroon Radio Television—which is supposed to provide the basis of ‘proper’ language use—with some journalists flirting with specific RP markers especially of the ‘ed’/[id] past tense, but fail to realise soft forms such as ‘laying in state’—which is homophonously heard as ‘lying in state’. At the same time, while some radio programmes privilege SBrE usage, some (including TV talk-shows) employ CPE in an enabling way. Thus, Cameroonians who ‘distinguish’ themselves linguistically may actually be betraying ‘instances of non-standard, casual English ... delivered in the prestigious RP accent’ (Locher and Strässler 4). There is growing evidence of fertile CPE and MT infiltration of CamE in the media and in creative works like literature and music, popularising CamE against every intellectual argument to the contrary.

From a sociolinguistic point of view, therefore, CamE is borne through conscious and unconscious efforts to affirm the local context of language use, most evident at the phonological level. Scholars like Chumbow (1996), Mbangwana (1983, 2014), Nkemleke (2005), Ngefac (2010), Mpoche (2013), and Anchimbe (2011, 2014), have endeavoured to position their research within the *acrolect-basolect* context of CamE, away from previous attempts to stigmatise it together with CPE and MT affiliations with the English language. Even with the sociological or status-bound biases that are attributed to these expressive variables, it is interesting to note that each level of communication is unique in itself because irrespective of the value attributed to them, the ‘baso-, meso- and *acrolect* are of equal linguistic complexity and equal functional power’ (Corder, 92). Contextually, these lectal variations may be seen as insightful to phonological, morphological, syntactical and semantic samples of CamE usage.

This is an interesting conjunction in any analysis of CamE, given the way it has partly evolved into (or from) MT, pidgin, and proto-creole contexts and the debates over its status as discussed in this volume. The syntactic context in which Cameroonian scholars place their analyses vindicates CamE from condescending assessments which reflect Sala's argument that when 'when errors become a tendency and then a norm, we can no longer refer to them as errors' (see chapter two of this collection). We can therefore understand a representative usage in CamE such as 'Chief of Service' for 'Service Head' in SBrE; in which case, the direct influence of the French language can be detected. Similarly, when CamE renders a form like 'You are going to where?' for SBrE 'Where are you going to?' we see enabling MT interference where language is localised in order to gain authenticity with its immediate users. In 'Language Policy and Educational Ideology in Multicultural Contexts: The case of Cameroon', Mpoche and Zeh have also elaborated on this, using a wide range of examples of English words and expressions influenced by French. The indigenous preferential usage has led Sala in "'That-clauses" in Cameroon English: A Study in Functional Extension' to propagate a pan-ethnic language structure as a common Bantu phenomenon, which makes use, for instance, of covet variations that will substitute 'I'm coming' for SBrE 'I'll be right back'. Clearly, the pragmatics of CamE and CPE are a challenge to SBrE and an inspiration to emerging trends in language use and development; a fact that has been acknowledged by Schneider's observation that a phrase like '*This is it* could be coined and used anywhere, but based on ... anecdotal observations it occurs frequently in and is thus highly characteristic of Cameroonian English only' (81). On the whole, then, CamE has become more *visible* in articulating hitherto muted or blurred linguistic positions of how language describes the identity problematic in Cameroon.

New Englishes, and Postcolonial Insights after Chomsky

Considering challenges against the authority of SBrE and how former peripheries are reconstituting their pre-colonial linguistic identities more militantly into a destabilising proto-canon medium, it is interesting how a post-Chomsky scholarship is also gathering momentum in the latter context. Through Universal Grammar (UG), Chomsky was performing a postmodernist strategy to relativise the notion of language acquisition (away from authoritative assumptions that were often prejudicial), in the same way as Michel Foucault's New Historicist concern with modernism's transformation of its experimental aesthetics into a grand narrative. No

wonder that in his foreword to *The Chomsky-Foucault Debate on Human Nature*, John Rajchman combines the two scholars in appreciating ‘a conversation across intellectual and political geographies’, wherein ‘the relation between linguistics and politics or the role of power in the analysis of discourse’ is resolved ‘with each man trying to translate the basic question in his own terms’ (viii). In other words, their ‘terms’ are a blurred zone of transition that appears to, but does not empower the cultural peripheries of their analyses in the end. There is ample evidence from a postmodernist aesthetics, for instance, that the relativity of language—which Chomsky was facilitating—has begotten a very fluid antithesis to the linguistic hegemonies of Empire: condescending pedagogy has been overwritten and in the era of New Englishes, speech patterns no longer suffer from privileged complexes of the metropolis. In the particular case of Cameroon with its unique histo-linguistic space, questions abound with regard to the rather ambivalent relationship between CamE and SBrE, in which case (some) scholars face (or suffer from) a problem of acceptability.

CamE is therefore evidence of the New Englishes phenomenon, which is helping to realign the hegemony of SBrE and its domineering outreach even in the 21st century. The development, whether as influence or resistance, indicates how colonial education is still a menace to, but countered by, our indigenising pedagogy, and stubborn incidents of its resurgence may well be a time-limited endeavour that may eventually serve only a referential purpose at best. Language is authorised by its users, but where an imposed status encounters challenges within its osmotic sphere, its sustenance becomes questionable and therefore doomed. If this sounds like too much of a claim to make, it is only because the English language in its formal state is still determining the manner in which life is conducted today in the postcolony. Yet, it should also be recognised that even SBrE in that formal state is no longer what it used to be prior to the heydays of Chomskyan linguistics, when Britannia was imagined as the empire on which the sun never set. While it can be argued that Chomsky is not a proponent of ‘Standard English’ in the light of the discussion here, mainly because it is his writing to Charles Fries that led to the abandonment of Error Analysis in the early 1970s; still, we assert that he is part of the evolving intellectual thrust that continued the formal universalisation of English in direct opposition to the linguistic trends that were being nursed in an emerging multicultural and multilingual Britain. This was in the immediate aftermath of Empire, when migrants from former colonies faced no barriers at the port of entry.

True, Fries ‘emphasise[s] items in contrast—the paradigmatic relations among linguistic elements’ (Fries 89); thus suggesting a hierarchisation of

the linguistic landscape. Still, Chomsky's concern with UG in *Knowledge of Language: Its Nature, Origin, and Use*—even as 'a theory of the "initial state" of the language faculty, prior to any linguistic experience' (4-5)—as a concept that can *capture* all languages, suggests both an authoritative position and the attempt to gloss over relative linguistic values that are consequently peripheral in any assessment which authenticates cultural presence. Colonisation and its cultural fallout was partly factored through language and, as such, the progenies of such ideological benefactors could not reconsider the terms of contact in favour of the dispossessed without envisaging new strategies of intellectual control. By suggesting in *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* that 'a grammar ... discuss[es] only exceptions and irregularities in any detail', whereas UG 'provides a full account of the speaker-hearer's competence' (6), Chomsky presents himself as a postmodern linguist who also thought it necessary at *that* point in time to *authorise* relativity in language acquisition and use in a universal and/or universalising context if only as a means of circumventing the embarrassment which anti-colonial sentiments were producing. The dubious "new" in New Historicism is legitimised here as a camouflage of authoritative meaning.

Here, a clue to CamE's suspicion against such linguistic theorisation is Mpoche and Parodi's attempt in 'When Binding is not Determined by Morphological Properties alone: The Case of Limbum Reflexives' to implicitly question the universality of Chomsky's Binding Theory. Consequently, we see Chomsky's innovative concept of a language acquisition device (LAD) as both indigenous (that is, unadulterated in the human psyche) and prior to human speech as a social factor. For Chomsky, LAD is 'an innate component of the human mind that yields a particular language through *interaction with presented experience*, a device that converts experience into a system of knowledge attained: knowledge of one or another language' (*Knowledge of Language* 3; our italics). But consider a conversation between two kids, three and five, who can barely say 'good morning' in MT, and the one enquires of the other: 'Awa, you say that what?' Here, purported L1 influence on L2 acquisition may still not be fully appreciated within context because if in this process, the elements which emerge from the linguistic environment of LAD aggregate toward a tendency—that of familiarity with 'presented experience ... of one or another language'—then that tendency can only be affirmed for what it is: a pre-regulatory linguistic manifestation that defies the sophisticated rules-bound rendition: LAD is not the problem; its aftermath is. And Chomsky personifies the intellectual affirmation through which this is performed. The problematic aftermath manifests in a subtle

conquest over so-called non-native speakers, who are bedazzled by postmodernist attributes to cultural sophistication as expressed through language. Interestingly, ‘presented experience’ from MT interaction across Cameroon coheres with the ‘you-say-that-what’ or ‘you-are-going-to-where’ tendency, and implies that before formal education and exposure to *alien* linguistic inferences, the linguistic environment reveals a commonality that is natively universal. It is no coincidence that MT inputs underlie primal speech patterns; a *universal* phenomenon which is indeed *innate* in the unconscious manifestation of human articulation. If speech patterns in the pre-regulatory stage of human communication are identical, then it is possible to say that LAD proclaims—and even celebrates—the kinship of indigenous human utterances.

This possibility explains why ‘you say that what?’ or ‘you are going to where?’ is *universal* to human language acquisition and speech, and predates formal WH-type questions which tend to overwrite the natural way of acquiring and rendering language. This is one major contribution of the structure of CamE to the accommodation of Chomsky’s theory in the peripheral spaces of (English) language study. If a child can achieve a quasi-MT construction in CamE/English when he/she has no MT competence, and when his/her linguistic socialisation is underscored by MT inheritance, at least in terms of structure, it is also possible that the rules of grammar, as we know them today, distort ‘presented experience’ into *patterned* experience the same way that morphological and phonological distortions have been served on both native and non-native speakers/learners since the days of Dr Johnson. The patterned experience tolerated Empire and its hegemonistic outlook and, in the process, subjugated inherent experience. Clearly, human speech form has a ‘universal’ component that resembles MT speech patterns, which then make human/universal grammar natively denotative—‘You are going to where?’—whereas a rules-based grammar—‘Where are you going to?’—connotes a controlling scheme that exposes even postmodernist relativism that was complicit with colonial control. Scholarship on Error Analysis was a refusal to acknowledge the indigenous provenance of LAD. This refusal, which may actually have resulted from ignorance, was a consequence of linguistic imperialism even at the seductive moment of New Historicism. Ironically, this form of imperialism is being perpetuated today by those we refer to as purist-scholars, in a variety of English like CamE.

The multicultural nature of life, which Empire and its demise inadvertently fostered, ironically signalled a challenge to the status of the English language from the margins of the very Empire. This explains why

an insignificant percentage of speakers use standard native English varieties, though there are more than 360 million native speakers of English. This is definitely a case in favour of new and more functional linguistic strands of a postcolonial provenance such as CamE, which blend with MT and CPE and describe a complex sociolinguistic setting resulting from both empire and a post-independence adaptive consciousness that attempts to replicate the colonial mentality. Indeed, in *Postcolonial English: Varieties Around the World*, Schneider has observed that '[i]n countries like Cameroon and Ghana the expansion of the use of and the covert prestige attributed to Pidgin English goes hand in hand with a strengthening of English, which is sometimes adopted as a family language (largely in urban and socially elitist contexts)' (67). Ironically, while previous pillars of SBrE like the BBC have endorsed the challenge to authoritative language use by recruiting non-native correspondents to accommodate linguistic and cultural relativity, it is still in the former colonies like Cameroon that we find flattering appropriation of RP.

Generally, as we have so far suggested, indigenised usages demonstrate a postcolonial reaction to cultural imperialism. And inasmuch as the language has proven its worth, and still does in almost every sphere of life, it is important that in the multicultural world of today where boundaries are rapidly being erased by and through the convergence of previous centres of power, the terms and conditions for any form of linguistic intercourse must recognise local realities—a fact which Anchimbe underscores in *Structural and Sociolinguistic Perspectives on Indigenisation: On Multilingualism and Language Evolution*. In fact, the discourse of a global village ironically legitimises this contextually peripheral need to redefine the concentric boundaries of articulation not necessarily in exclusive terms but with a desire to enable complementarity in language usage. Realities and the meanings that are related to them are relative to the speakers and their geo-historicity; reason why linguistic overlaps can no longer be understood only in osmotic terms but as sequences of meaning that define a less polarised world. As such, cultural revaluation in a global context necessarily has to accommodate local reality as a glocalising strategy to shed the misgivings that were constructed by imperial violence.

Interestingly, the bulk of evidence that CamE and CPE hold sway over a vast majority of Cameroonians, irrespective of demographics, is yet to be a comforting fact to those who still cling to symbolic borders across which they encode conservative privileges. In fact, as Ngefack observes in 'Cameroon English Accent: Issues of Standardisation, Attitudes and Pedagogic Concerns', a significant percentage of Cameroonians who

claim to speak SBrE is undercut by ‘obvious Camerooniansisms that characteri[se] every aspect of their speech’ (41). It is obvious that CamE is attaining proxy standardisation, and in the multicultural world of today, it is our hope that this process can anchor a relative linguistic identity that should reflect the composite historicity of Cameroon’s national space. The political will to enhance this momentum through appropriate legislation will help to redeem the rhetoric of independence, and invigorate the ongoing debate about ‘emergence’. This political goal can hardly be achieved if we cannot articulate political, economic, cultural, and technological visions in a customised language, which CamE facilitates. For this to be a reality, there is also need for indigenous languages to be enhanced, to ensure enabling partnership between mutating local realities and their global alternatives. This is vital because within the linguistic mosaic of Cameroon, there is the aggressive intrusion of another composite variant, Camfranglais—a unique brand fostered by a vibrant demographic of mostly adolescents that combines French and English with other languages. This is actually an ironic response to the emerging nuances of multiculturalism and globalisation, wherein local colour insists on, and propagates, its own visibility.

Literary Glimpses and Language Change

New Englishes also comes with its literatures. In Cameroon, Anglophone Cameroon creative writing constitutes a component of this composite literature. While the essays here are not concerned with this brand of literature (although Ayafor’s paper draws on this literature to analyse language use), they nevertheless offer new insights into reading both canonical and postcolonial texts in less predictable and less reactionary ways. Here, there is also a shift in critical attention from what used to be a dominant focus on a colonial/colonised binary, and from which a blame-criticism and its sentimental narrative ironically cushioned post-independence weaknesses. New Englishes literature such as Anglophone Cameroon literature is partly borne of this failure, and demands specific socio-political and linguistic contexts for its analysis. The advantage of a more objective approach to reading texts that focus on canonical and postcolonial spaces is not just the deconstructionist values of re-engaging old themes, (which may actually amount to participating in the same game of cultural stereotyping that canonists proposed, if not well handled); it is also the non-polarising and relatively objective revaluation of the literary field against the sentimental verve of anti-colonial consciousness. Multiculturalism, which is being celebrated today by apologists as the next

phase of global humanism, is a symptom of New Englishes literatures, and actually negotiates no permanent authority in language and vision. Consequently, while relative identities still uphold their values, they also have to understand that less osmotic interaction requires a new language and especially awareness, for its mediation.

While we do not dwell extensively on the literary perspectives here, it is important to note the need for a form of customised reading, which some of the papers reflect, without the narcissism of 'writing back'. This is because to 'write back' stigmatises *our* postcolonial condition, as evident in the stagnated discourse of Pan-Africanism, for instance, and claims authority that may not only be a continuation of the othering mentality of colonialisation but, in fact, becomes embarrassing in the border-blurring endeavour of literary creativity and criticism. As with the linguistic analyses, it is imperative that 'space' be prioritised in literary evaluations without the sentimentality that usually accompanies superior/inferior psyches. In this way, we will come to understand why 'errors', for instance, are accommodated as dialectal forms as in the language of Shakespeare's 'low' characters, through that of Thomas Hardy's rustics and D. H. Lawrence's miners, on the one hand, and the linguistic implications in the rehabilitation of East London and its othered demographics when the UK hosted the Olympics in 2012, on the other hand; whereas such data in postcolonial writings is easily sutured through 'error analysis'.

The literary contributions in this collection thus attempt to shift from the predictable paradigm of blame that fixates postcoloniality. They instead offer a pluralistic and more accommodating purview of what can be described as a neo-Africanist reading of both existing and emerging literatures without surrendering to the allure of multicultural illusions. In this way, a vindicating assessment of Conrad and his connotative representation of difference refocuses attention on the danger of sustaining unavailing stereotypes at a time when the coding of such difference can actually be self-implicating; in much the same way as a twinning of Achebe's Okonkwo and Irving Washington's Van Winkle sheds light on the complex moments of British colonialism in America and Africa.

In all, the idea of 'bordered identities' as reflected in the title of this volume, highlights and interrogates not just the post-independence condition of Cameroon, but also revives ways of reading the canon and its manifestation in both language and literature. This revival is necessary because, otherwise, the seductive nuances in the theoretical constructs of globalisation, multiculturalism, neoliberalism, and so on, will finally condition Cameroonian/African scholarship the same way that formal

colonial education did. A degree of cultural awareness alerts us against this ‘threat’ but also cautions us against the sentimentality that may result from the blame consciousness of the othered.

Synopsis of Analyses

In Blaissius Chiatoh’s ‘Identity Bundling and Contested Citizenship across the Cameroon Anglophone-Francophone Borderline’, the idea of a contested identity is analysed as particularly unique to Cameroon because of the country’s complex colonial background. This perspective signals the sociolinguistic fallout of post-empire configurations of political spaces and their proxy mentality in post-independence articulations. For Chiatoh, therefore, the problematic of ‘identity bundling’ contests the post-independence programme of reunification and a unitary ‘arrangement’ in 1961 and 1972 respectively, on the basis of its inability to guarantee equal citizenship rights. Concerned with the apparent failure in Cameroon to negotiate identity and citizenship along a colonial and post-independence trajectory, he therefore highlights the need for an alternative notion of citizenship that should overwrite the contentious binary that is characterised by constructed complexes. He argues, consequently, that the strategy by leadership to ‘[map] out the citizenry into bundles’ compromises the very basis of the nation because, ironically, such a ‘bundling tactic has generated an enabling environment for citizenship rights contestations’.

This assertive negotiation of a linguistic identity has been suggestively described as ‘Cameroonianism’. In ‘Cameroon English: What future?’, Sala argues that a ‘purist perspective’ perturbs the enabling sense of Cameroonianness not only because in their usage, apparent ‘errors become a tendency and then a norm’ but also because in his/her remedial orientation ‘a Cameroonian ... does not consider himself/[herself] a learner, but a user, of English’. Cameroonianism is therefore evidence that language use—especially of colonial languages—is increasingly being localised as an identity marker whose valorisation continues the process of negating Universalist notions and their homogenous propaganda. The idea here is to understand the manner in which indigenous communities in the ‘imagined communities’ of post-independence are intervening in the evolution of the colonial language as facilitators of hybrid variants. In the end emphasis is necessarily placed on indigenisation, which then gives linguistic hybridity a new perspective: the native speaker (of the colonial metropolis) is decentred at the same time that the indigenous speaker (in former colonies) creates a new centre from which intelligibility is

negotiated in a localised and partnering sense. In this way, nomenclatures like ‘West African English’ become obsolete because micro linguistic influences overtake their proto-normative considerations.

In ‘The English Language, Culture and Interculturality in Cameroon: A linguistic Analysis of Linus T. Asong’s *A Crown of Thorns*’, Miriam Ayafor is concerned with how Cameroon culture and interculturality manifest through language, as reflected in literature. Analysing the causal relationship between national culture and interculturality in Asong’s novel, Ayafor suggests that the CamE and/or New Englishes features in the novel are a consequence of ecological, cultural, and overall indigenous mores resisting the hegemony of SBrE. With data from lexical, grammatical, idiomatic, etc., items, she acknowledges Asong’s contribution to the African novel linguistically (in almost the same way as scholars who have paid tribute to Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*) in which the valorisation of local colour challenges the native speaker to modify his/her language. In this way, Ayafor argues that traces of a linguistic Cameroonism evolve a cultural and intercultural discourse in distinguishable moments of direct and authorial speech.

For Joseph Nkwain, in ‘Further Evidence of the Indigenisation of English in Cameroon: Pitting the Norm against Localised Forms in Dissertation Acknowledgements (DAs)’, the binary of the canon versus its hybrid becomes the main concern. Nkwain’s focus is on the recalcitrant strain in CamE which helps in formatting New Englishes. Indigenisation, for instance, becomes one way by which CamE is modifying the English language and asserting its own worldview on that of the native speaker.

Hans Fonka’s rhetorical challenge, ‘Is Cameroon Pidgin English a Pidgin, a Pidgincreole or a Creole?’, is a timely investigation that enhances the process of putting to rest the conceited debate on the status of CPE. Having already addressed evolutionary, attitudinal and functional variables in the varieties of CPE in his PhD thesis in 2011, Fonka now investigates the status of PE in Cameroon within the evolving context in which languages come together and splinter into new moods of expressivity. The intersection between Pidgin and Creole, evident in CPE, is another interesting point from which to observe and interrogate this linguistic brand as a contact language. The stigmatisation which CPE suffered as ‘bad English’, for instance, has been exposed partly as a futile momentum. Fonka thus argues that CPE has evolved to the status of a Pidgincreole; a significant claim in a linguistic context in which constructed complexes determine other complexes that are both unrealistic and condescending.

Valentine Ubanako's paper, 'Humour Translation and Social Cohesion in Cameroon: A Sociocultural Challenge? ', provides a translational intersection that can possibly resolve the language problematic in Cameroon, at least indicatively. But as other scholars like Chaitoh in this collection have suggested, translation still raises the ghost of chauvinistic authority to the disadvantage of the Anglophone Cameroonian, in which case Ubanako's proposal via comedy may be remedial only as far as we do not scratch beneath the surface of the apparent conviviality that an elitist bilingual option stages. One troublesome example can be the politicisation of meaning through a trivial form of translation. While Ubanako provides a formal translation for the Social Democratic Front (SDF) party, it is also possible that in translation, the dignity of that political establishment is trivialised in a colloquial Cameroonianism as 'sans domicile fixe'. Here, the intention, probably from militants of rival parties—if such tension were to be rendered through humour—will be to ridicule the party as propagating a nomadic lifestyle or offering a political platform on the basis of its officially tallied results at the polls.

The papers on literature open with Mbuh Tenu Mbuh's analysis in 'Conrad's Other "Heart of Darkness" on a Cubist Canvass', which examines *Heart of Darkness* as the relativisation of colonial 'darkness' hovering over native spaces with a crass propensity to usurp meaning and impose its own codes. The manner in which this narration has been acknowledged by especially African scholars ironically promotes the colonial agenda, all the more so because the post-imperial allure is to vindicate post-independence leadership whose own challenges, strategies, and failures urge them to seek refuge in the convenient narrative of imagined darkness. Mbuh thus argues that while Conrad's narrative represents the manner in which successive empires—beginning formally with the Roman empire—exerted symbolic darkness over occupied territory as a means of legitimising their authority, it is also important to note that anti-colonial effervescence conditioned, and still does, our reading of *Heart of Darkness* as characterised by Achebe's reference to Conrad as 'a bloody racist'. It is necessary then to understand that Conrad was initiating a modernist style of double vision on the same object, which a traditional readership easily missed or misunderstood.

Still in terms of the revaluation of the author's worldview from the standpoint of his work, Kelvin Ngong Toh, in 'Narrative Realism and the Question of Home and Exile: Reading Caryl Phillips's Novels', underscores the significance of an exilic ideology and the quest for a homeland as primordial to the emerging sense of personality for the characters who animate Phillips's work. The ambivalence of exile, which

embraces nostalgia, regret, blame, and so on, necessitates a degree of level-headedness for a writer like Phillips whose narrative, according to Toh, evinces a realistic quest for the typical postcolonial exile.

For Nah Charles Nyistotemve, in ‘The Recluse in African and American Narratives: Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and Irving Washington’s “Rip Van Winkle”’, the historical context of literary creativity is insightful to a rhetorical reading of a pre-independence character like Rip and his pre-colonial complement, Okonkwo. The relationship between character and history or even between character and no-history—as is the case when the protagonists are taken out of their respective historical spaces—suggests the remaking of history without its characteristic momentum. For instance, could the war of independence have occurred successfully in America if sympathisers of England like Rip were around? Conversely, what would have been the fate of the Umoufia clan if an Apollonian character like Okonkwo was never displaced? Nah suggests that the ‘absence’ of these characters is a strategy to enable change and history.

Emelda Ngufor Samba’s paper, ‘ICT, Performing Arts, and Socio-Cultural Change’ provides a contextual reading of the impact of our changing technological landscape on the social demographics that relate to theatre. Highlighting the interconnection between ICTs and the Performing Arts, she argues persuasively about the significance of theatre in the world of entertainment and education, and draws attention to the concern of theatre-makers with the effect of a technological revolution and the changes in the taste and world views this is causing especially among young audiences. In analysing what is clearly a fertile combination of the theatre experience with new communication media, and relating this to Applied Theatre, she demonstrates how underprivileged groups or communities are empowered to view their world from an enabling perspective.

Ernest L. Veyu’s ‘Wine, Women and Witches in *Macbeth*’ analyses three markers of hero vulnerability in *Macbeth* as precipitating the tragic realism of the play. The physical, psychological, and metaphysical nature of the factors against Macbeth describe the complicated terrain of his existence both as a weak and ambitious individual; and explains Veyu’s claim that he is the least liberated of Shakespeare’s heroes.

Finally, in ‘Communication and Signification in Theatre: A Semiotic Reading of Theatrical Elements in Emelda Samba’s *Therapeutic Works*’, Paul Animbom suggests that there are invisible borders in theatre which can be perceived and understood through a semiotic engagement with this form of art. To do this, he highlights the ‘area of communicative commonality’ in theatre based generally on the views of Peirce C. Sanders

in which a triadic reading of signs relies on the causality between the sign-object, interpretant and the representamen. Drawing on three of Emelda Samba's therapeutic productions, he betrays a bias for 'a consistent use of communicative signs' that 'communicate and foster change' and go on to 'fortify issues of identity amongst the participants and the community'. Specifically, 'Stigma and trauma' become symptomatic cases of both 'mental health problems' and 'issues of identity.' Interestingly, in a mosaic space like Cameroon, Animbon reveals how the identity overlap can also be linguistic in spatial proximity to both actors/performers and audience/participants.

Conclusion

In the process of editing this collection, we have been amazed by the significant shifts on the global stage, and how they affect the borderly identities discussed here. These have been most articulated by the dramatic election of Donald Trump in 2016; the consequent resurgence of extreme Right ideology and its exclusive sentiments represented by the President's obsession with a fence diplomacy; the crass spectre of South-to-North migration and its grim aftermath; the Coffin Revolution and calls for secession by (Former British) Southern Cameroons nationalists in Cameroon; pro-independence agitation for Catalonia in Spain; the election of George Weah as the President of Liberia; the fall of Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe after nearly four decades in power; the redemptive election of Cyril Ramaphosa as the President of the African National Congress and of South Africa;—the list is endless, but strung by a common denominator: identity discourse remains the burden of the 21st century, and all attempts to rationalise it in multicultural and globalisation discourses suggest a need to go back to the drawing board of global co-existence to underscore the fact that no amount of diplomatic sweet-talk can gloss over the imperative of belonging and participating in a world of contextual values.

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PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

IDENTITY BUNDLING AND CONTESTED CITIZENSHIP ACROSS THE CAMEROON ANGLOPHONE-FRANCOPHONE BORDERLINE

BLASIOUS A. CHIATOH

Introduction

Postmodern society reveals a tendency to compartmentalise and polarise people into definable categories based on socio-cultural, geo-historical and political variables. Critical in this compartmentalisation is the question of identity in the perception and representation of the other. The quest for consolidation of power and ownership of politico-linguistic spaces inevitably leads to careful, quite often, implicit demarcation of identity boundaries that separate citizens into groups with common concerns and destinies. Usually, these border demarcations result in loosely bound entities largely held together by a legal rather than by a legitimate sense of belonging. Linguistic sentiments and loyalties become yardsticks for the definition, redefinition and recognition of citizenship rights in the nation. In contemporary Cameroon society, identity and citizenship issues are characterised by bundling constructed along politico-linguistic lines. In this chapter, I explore identity bundling as a key manifestation of the identity and citizenship crises that rock the postmodern Cameroonian society across the legendary River Mungo. I tarry on the tacit public approval of a Francophone superior versus Anglophone inferior status as the epicentre of this crisis and contend that another citizenship is not only possible but necessary. This alternative citizenship should recognise the equality and unique identities of Anglophones and Francophones within a federal framework. The necessity for such a citizenship becomes even more urgent after the celebration of 50 years of unitary existence.

The question of national unity remains as current in today's Cameroon as it was half a century ago. At reunification in 1961, the Southern

Cameroons and La République du Cameroun were committed, either rightly or wrongly, to building a one and indivisible nation, thereby cementing the fissures created by long years of separation. Such an engagement meant the cultivation of a citizenship void of divisions and discriminations. Convinced that local languages, because of their ethnic affiliations, would obstruct, rather than enhance the achievement of such a citizenship, reunification architects opted for an official bilingual policy as the primary instrument for fashioning a national spirit of oneness. To the ordinary person on the western side of the Mungo, this meant upholding the dignity of and promoting harmonious cohabitation between them and those on the other side of the Mungo. Regrettably, events unfolding in the years following reunification revealed quite a different reality – an undeclared agenda of institutionalised effacement of all vestiges of British colonial heritage as part of a covert plan of total incorporation of Anglophones into a strongly centralised unitary state (Fanso, 2009, p. 11). Rather than usher in national cohesion, politics became an instrument of compartmentalisation and division via the projection of difference with varied modelling techniques employed in shaping opinions towards collective perception, definition and representation of the other in the nation. The outcome is that today, more than half a century later, national cohesion across the Anglophone-Francophone borderline is increasingly menaced by identity and citizenship crises resulting from ever-deepening politico-linguistic differences, mutual distrust and deprivations. It is an atmosphere in which former Southern Cameroonians (now Anglophones) are permanently subjected to multiple forms of dehumanisation, indeed, demonization.

In pursuance of these policies, successive regimes have mapped out the citizenry into bundles with strong linguistic, cultural and political undertones. Whether by mistake or by design, the boundary between Anglophones and Francophones has, and continues to widen, thus leading to compelling questions about the workability of a single, strong and prosperous nation. This bundling tactic has generated an enabling environment for citizenship rights contestations sanctioned by official tacit approval of stereotypical representation and stigmatisation of citizens based on colonial heritage. Although the motivations underpinning this reality are primarily political in nature, at the surface, they take up important linguistic dimensions to the extent that citizenship becomes closely tied to which of the two languages (English and French) one speaks or is considered to speak. In these circumstances, the Anglophone is contiguously subjected to institutionalised marginalisation, indeed, a form of reward for their unpreparedness to accept assimilation into the

Francophone majority. In this chapter, I claim that identity bundling is a concrete manifestation of the inability to construct an inclusive national identity that respects cultural disparities across the Mungo. I contend that persistence in the pursuit of an illegitimate unification agenda centred on implicit political preferences and stereotypical labelling of citizens on politico-linguistic lines will only help to further jeopardise avenues for achieving peaceful cohabitation between Anglophones and Francophones. I argue that after more than 50 years of failed attempts to cultivate a spirit of peaceful coexistence, the need for an alternative model of citizenship cultivation is not only possible but also urgent. This alternative model should scrupulously respect the pre-1972 referendum arrangement through full recognition of the necessity for separate and unique identities for Anglophones and Francophones.

Conceptualising identity bundling and contested citizenship

Perhaps, it is worthwhile to start with a clarification of the key concepts, namely; identity bundling and contested citizenship in that order. Before looking at identity bundling, it seems necessary to say what identity first of all stands for. Identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others (Weedon, 2004, p. 1). Admittedly, individual or group identity can take different forms depending on the socio-cultural and political context. But even more crucial is the fact that identity, whether social, cultural or political meets a very basic psychological need for recognition and belonging, and that it contributes to an individual's self-esteem so that group identity becomes an integral element of an individual's self-concept (Palmberg, 1999, p. 24). In this connection, identity bundling draws from the idea of bundling which means tying up or fastening things or objects in a single unit, entity or bundle. It is also drawn from the notion of parcelling which refers to wrapping of things or objects in a tissue, paper, cloth, etc. Bundling, as employed in this chapter, thus has to do with putting people of different local cultural backgrounds into a single bundle or package through stereotyped assignment of identity labels as a means of achieving quite often implicit socio-political goals. It is, therefore, a deliberate act of systematic identity engineering, indeed, an act of stereotyped categorisation of citizens for the sake of socio-cultural and political differentiation.

According to Starkey (2002, p. 7) 'citizens belong to communities, defined as groupings who recognise that they have something in common'.