

Aufsatz

Oral Performance and Pidgin Stylization in  
Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and  
*No Longer at Ease*

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**Abstract**

Through qualitative analysis – informed by the theoretical frame and methodology of the third wave of sociolinguistics – this essay examines the use of oral culture as a sociolinguistic resource in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer at Ease*. I conceptualize colonial discourse as a form of linguistic violence and domination, which constructs the colonized as the Other; consequently, I focus on the effects of colonial discourse on the language use and identity construction of colonized characters. Next, I extend Nikolas Coupland's model of 'dialect stylistics' to pidgin stylization and performance in *No Longer at Ease*. I show how, in stylized performance, speakers can lay claim to localities by amplifying and disrupting the relationship between social meanings and regionally- or socially-indexed linguistic forms and varieties.

*Keywords:* Performance, stylization, identity, dialect stylistics, Chinua Achebe, Nigerian English, pidgin, sociolinguistics, postcolonial literature

„Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly,  
and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten”  
(Achebe 1994: 7)

## Introduction

Chinua Achebe's father was a missionary teacher in colonial Nigeria, who arranged for his children to go to the local English school. The colonial educational apparatus recognized Achebe's talent and awarded him with an academic scholarship to England where he studied English literature, history and religious philosophy. After returning to Nigeria, he was employed by a local radio station, and later served as director of Heinemann's African region. He was an important political figure during and in the aftermath of the Nigerian Civil War (1964-1970).

He acquired international fame with the publication of his first and most famous novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958), which dramatized the tragic destruction of the Igbo community through the onset of colonization. Achebe's second novel *No Longer at Ease* forms a sequel to *Things Fall Apart*; it continues to thematize the effects of colonialism on Lagos and rural Nigeria through the fate of the Okonkwo family. The hero of *No Longer at Ease*, Obi Okonkwo, receives a grant from the Igbo tribe to study in England. After returning to Nigeria, he is employed as a civil servant in Lagos, but his metropolitan lifestyle lands him in debt. When his girlfriend opts for an abortion, he is caught in a downward spiral. He takes bribes and is charged with corruption. The story is set in the 1950s and offers a unique glimpse into the tensions of the society approaching independence from Great Britain (1960). The African trilogy's third novel is *Arrow of God* (1964), which puts Ezeulu, the main priest, at the front and center of the conflict between tribal society and colonial Christianity.

## Theoretical background

The third wave of sociolinguistics conceptualizes style as a set of linguistic features and uses which play an active role in the construction of social meaning and identity. This approach foregrounds the study of stylization/styling, crossing, and performance, centering ways of actively, creatively, reflexively creating social meanings and identities (see Bartha & Hámori 2010). Stylization is an „artistic picture of the language of the other” (Bakhtin 1981: 362), a polyphonic utterance in which the speaker appropriates, reworks and re-accentuates the language of the other (see also Rampton 2006, Coupland 2007).

To better understand ‘stylization’, we may turn to the so-called ‘dialect stylistics’ model, which grew out of a new way of thinking about dialect. Rampton (2006: 361) holds that „our understanding of ‘accent’, ‘dialect’ or ‘linguistic variety’ should encompass much more than just a set of co-occurring phonological and grammatical forms.” For, in fact, „there is a wide range of semantic and pragmatic phenomena on the fringe which

sociolinguistics has not systematically addressed, having to do with rhetorical style, stance and implicature” (Garrett, Coupland & Williams 1999: 323). For example, it is the case that ‘standard’ varieties are thought to be „more ontologically real, historic, coherent, consensual and valuable – in short, as more authentic” (Coupland 2007: 182). Since dialect varieties „generally constitute known repertoires with known socio-cultural and personal associations,” they are „particularly well configured for stylized performance” (Coupland 2001: 350).

When speakers are styling, they are not speaking in what Coupland (2007: 183) terms their own ‘real’ voices or personas; they do not project in any simple sense „their real self,” but preferred, invented voices/personas: they are engaged in „being [themselves] and in ‘not being [themselves]’, in using stylistic resources in order to index identities and at the same time to mark the fact that these were not identities that [they] authentically owned or inhabited.” Coupland proposes that in stylization speakers are engaged in ‘using’ as well as reflexively ‘mentioning’ speech styles, and it is useful to view speakers as being engaged in simultaneously deauthenticating and reauthenticating themselves, deauthenticating and reauthenticating the practices they are alluding to and stylizing (ibid.). Just what levels of ownership, authorship, and endorsement the stylized utterance implies in is left unclear, for „engineered obscurity” is a general attribute of stylization (Coupland 2001: 366).

According to the social constructivist approach, Judith Butler’s concepts of performance and performativity are the means of identity construction and resistance to social norms (Bakhtin 1981, Bhabha 2010). In performative speech acts, speakers reconstruct the social and ideological meanings usually associated with linguistic forms and varieties. In this study, I connect the concept of performativity with Richard Bauman’s notion of cultural performance.

Butler’s concept of performativity can be connected to Bauman’s concept of (high or cultural) performance. According to Bauman (2001: 168–169f), performance is typically a public display of communicative competence, distinguishable from other performances on the basis of generic and formal features. High performances are temporally and spatially bound, planned and programmed events (like a theatrical production) endowed with heightened intensity (cf. Bauman 1992: 46f, Bauman & Briggs 1990). Coupland (2007: 147–148f) extends the characteristics identified by Bauman, arguing that high performance produces „communicative focusing” on multiple levels: *form, meaning, situation, performer, relational, achievement* and *repertoire focusing*. To a greater or lesser extent, focusing in overlapping dimensions characterize high performances.

Also important to consider are the culturally specific ways of indexing and coding cultural performances. Whereas the conventional opening – *Once upon a time* – signals the telling of a fairy tale, the announcement – *Ladies and Gentlemen* – heralds another type of performance. In the absence of such codes, the setting, seating arrangement, rituals, linguistic and stylistic features help identify the performance. In order to introduce or mark performance-frames, it is important to recognize that different communities of practices use different codes (cf. Goffman 1986).

The most important feature of cultural performance is, according to Bauman (1992: 47–48f), reflexivity. Cultural performances have the capacity to make audiences reflect upon the socio-psychological, cultural, and formal norms animating the performed event. Coupland (2007: 149f) calls the reflexive maneuvers cultural performances set in motion their metasocial and metacultural potential. Because performances encompass a given community's most memorable, repeated, and reflexively accessible repertoires (Bauman 2001), the meanings and identities constituted by these performances reveal the broader system of signification of which they are part and parcel. By embedding linguistic and cultural practices in social relations, performances lay open to scrutiny how identity is constructed and reconstructed.

## Linguistic background

### *Nigerian English*

It is difficult to explain the presence of English in Nigeria (Bamgbose 1971, Bamiro 1994, Salami 2013). Nigerian English is a heterogenous language, which has various varieties associated with speakers' regional and ethno-linguistic backgrounds as well as their social and educational levels. The Nigerian English spoken by educated Nigerians can approximate British English – though through globalization or migration American or other Global Englishes can also influence it. Furthermore, amidst familial surroundings, standard Nigerian English speakers can prefer to use a less standard and more „nativized” or pidginized variety of English. Two regional varieties are southern and Hausa English (spoken in northern Nigeria). The marginalized and stigmatized pidgin English is the Nigerian lingua franca, the language of communication among speakers with different ethnolinguistic backgrounds.

## Nigerian pidgin English

Pidgin languages come into being when language contact occurs in multilingual communities: if speakers don't understand each other's mother languages, a mixed language emerges which enables them to communicate with each other. The so-called process of pidginization can occur in multilingual situations, in which one language is dominant over the others. Several theories state that the precondition to the linguistic process of pidginization is the existence of at least three languages (cf. Wardhaugh 2006: 58f). Characteristically, pidgin languages appeared at international ports and commercial centers, in the European colonies and plantations. The characteristics of pidgins are language mixing, phonological variation, simplified grammar, relatively narrow/local lexicon.<sup>1</sup> The majority of pidgins are only used for a brief period of time, but in some cases, it happens that a pidgin acquires complex grammar and a wide linguistic community – like Nigerian Pidgin.

Pidginization and creolization describe distinct processes. Nigerian English and Nigerian pidgin English occupy two opposite ends of the spectrum. However, there is a great amount of overlap between the two languages – so that we can only state with confidence whether the given dialect variety is closer to Nigerian English or Nigerian pidgin. In the Nigerian context, the further delineation of pidgin and creole is further complicated by the fact that Nigerian English exists in / as both pidgin and creole varieties. In the coming analysis, a further problem arises because the various pidgin varieties (e.g., Lagosian and Nigerian pidgin) cannot be clearly differentiated; this differentiation is made even more difficult since *No Longer at Ease* was written in the 1950s.

It follows that pidgins may be characterized as languages and linguistic varieties. Neither mode of categorization is without its problems, however, in the analysis that follows, I will treat pidgins as languages.

## Analysis

### *Colonialism, language use and identity*

I examine dialogues among the colonizers and the colonized, and among the colonizers, in order to map the effects of colonial and linguistic violence on colonized characters. In the racially constituted colonial system, I compare the role of Igboized and standard English in the construction of

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<sup>1</sup> For a long time, even linguists looked upon pidgin languages as the „rotten” or inadequate version of the source language, which was therefore of no interest to them. Furthermore, non-white pidgin speakers were, accordingly, thought to possess a social, cultural or/and cognitive deficit (see Hymes 1971, Alim 2016).

meaning and identity. I analyze the local interactional dimension of colonial discourse with particular attention to the ways in which these discourses construct the colonized as Other as well as the oppositional linguistic and identity acts of the colonized characters.

*Violence and linguistic dominance: dialogue among colonizers and colonized*

In order to compare the language practices of the colonizers and the colonized, I focus on the role of Igbo, ‘standard’ and Igboized English in the construction of meaning. I show how the Commissioner – grounding his discourse in the Manichean opposition between „us” and „them” – constructs the Igbo people as Other (see also Fanon 1968, Mbembe 2001). I pay particular attention to the sociolinguistic resources with which he establishes – and the colonized attempt to counter – his linguistic dominance.

In the following oft-quoted extract, the District Commissioner, accompanied by soldiers, encounters Obierika and other elders in their search for Okonkwo. After killing the Commissioner’s messenger, who interrupted the tribal council in which the decision to take up arms against the white men was about to be taken, Okonkwo had committed suicide to save himself from dishonor:

- (1) “Which among you is called Okonkwo?” [The Commissioner] asked through his interpreter.  
“He is not here,” replied Obierika.  
“Where is he?”  
“He is not here!”  
The Commissioner became angry and red in the face. He warned the men that unless they produced Okonkwo forthwith he would lock them all up. The men murmured among themselves, and Obierika spoke again.  
“We can take you where he is, and perhaps your men will help us.”  
The Commissioner did not understand what Obierika meant when he said, “Perhaps your men will help us.” One of the most infuriating habits of these people was their love of superfluous words, he thought. [...] Then they came to the tree from which Okonkwo’s body was dangling, and they stopped dead.  
“Perhaps your men can help us bring him down and bury him,” said Obierika. “We have sent for strangers from another village to do it for us, but they may be a long time coming.”  
The District Commissioner changed instantaneously. The resolute administrator in him gave way to the student of primitive customs.  
“Why can’t you take him down yourselves?” he asked.  
“It is against our custom,” said one of the men. “It is an abomination for a man to take his own life. It is an offense against the Earth, and a man who commits it will not be buried by his clansmen. His body is evil, and only strangers may touch it. That is why we ask your people to bring him down, because you are strangers.”  
“Will you bury him like any other man?” asked the Commissioner.

“We cannot bury him. Only strangers can. We shall pay your men to do it. When he has been buried we will then do our duty by him. We shall make sacrifices to cleanse the desecrated land.”

Obierika, who had been gazing steadily at his friend’s dangling body, turned suddenly to the District Commissioner and said ferociously: “That man was one of the greatest men in Umuofia. You drove him to kill himself; and now he will be buried like a dog...” He could not say any more. His voice trembled and choked his words.

“Shut up!” shouted one of the messengers, quite unnecessarily.

“Take down the body,” the Commissioner ordered his chief messenger, “and bring it and all these people to the court.”

“Yes, sah,” the messenger said, saluting.”

The Commissioner went away, taking three or four of the soldiers with him. In the many years in which he had toiled to bring civilization to different parts of Africa he had learned a number of things. One of them was that a District Commissioner must never attend to such undignified details as cutting a hanged man from the tree. Such attention would give the natives a poor opinion of him. In the book which he planned to write he would stress that point. As he walked back to the court he thought about that book. Every day brought him some new material. The story of this man who had killed a messenger and hanged himself would make interesting reading. One could almost write a whole chapter on him. Perhaps not a whole chapter but a reasonable paragraph, at any rate. There was so much else to include, and one must be firm in cutting out details. He had already chosen the title of the book, after much thought: *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*. (Achebe 1994: 206–209<sup>2</sup>)

The violent nature of the colonial apparatus, the inseparability of material and linguistic power hierarchies appears in this dialogue: dishonoring tribal tradition and threatening to arrest the elders, the Commissioner orders them to leave the *obr*<sup>3</sup> and show him Okonkwo’s corpse.

Since *Things Fall Apart* is set in the early days of colonization, it is not surprising that the tribal men do not speak English and the DC requires the services of a local interpreter. At this historical juncture, the majority of Igbos do not speak English – and colonizers as a rule do not acquire the tribal, indigenous languages.<sup>4</sup> Monolingualism renders the Igbo speakers even more vulnerable, those leaders who do not speak English must rely on the goodwill of the interpreters of their colonial masters, as represented in the scene in which the clansmen were dishonored in their captivity. Achebe represents the Commissioner’s questions in standard English and the Igbo

<sup>2</sup> The numbers in parentheses given after quotations denote the cited editions of the novels. *TFA* henceforth abbreviates *Things Fall Apart* (1994) and *NLAE* condenses *No Longer at Ease* (1991).

<sup>3</sup> According to the glossary, *the large living quarters of the head of the family* is called an *obi* (*TFA* 211).

<sup>4</sup> Language policy played a pivotal role in British colonialism. In the colonies, the contact between colonial administrators and indigenous tribes became English, which over time led to the forced substitution of indigenous languages with English in the colonial state apparatus, education, commerce and politics etc. Over the course of centuries the British colonial presence in Nigeria has led to the emergence of Nigerian pidgins and Englishes.

characters' use of Igbo through an Igboized/Africanized English (on the use of Africanized English in the Nigerian novel, see Achebe 1965). The interpreter's ambivalent linguistic practice reflects the power hierarchies between the two languages and cultures; he attempts to take the edge off the Commissioner's statements and advise the tribal elders in Igbo.

The use of Igboized English and culturally specific idioms (which are preserved by the messenger's translation) provoke the Commissioner's anger and condescension. He interprets what he experiences as their „love of superfluous words” as an instantiation of their inferior and „primitive” culture. He evinces no interest in local practices until he sees Okonkwo's dangling body (which for him is nothing other than a static object) and picks up on the curious fact that tribal customs do not allow the men to touch the body. At this point, he suddenly acquires interest in these „primitive customs” (the Igbo man's explanation serves as clarification not only for the Commissioner, but also for the non-Igbo reader). In spite of the arousal of his interest, the Commissioner is satisfied by their answers; he brings the cultural discussion to a quick end and reassumes his role as „resolute administrator,” ordering his men to cut down the body while continuing to fantasize about the treatise he's going to write. His conception of Igbo culture is twofold: he sees tribal customs as the object of his libidinal investment and the barbaric, superfluous antithesis of European culture which must be cut (Mbembe 2001). The interaction suggests that the colonial construction of Africa hinges upon the death of Africans.

Whereas Obierika – an esteemed man and Okonkwo's friend in the village – was the spokesman for the group earlier, he remains silent during the cultural explanation discussed above, gazing at the dangling body until his outburst. The anticolonial tirade addressed to the Commissioner attributes the suicide to the colonialist forces that had taken over Umuofia thus offering an alternative explanation. Obierika likens Okonkwo's shameful, disgraceful death to that of a dog, alluding to K.'s death at the end of *The Trial*: „Wie ein Hund!”, sagte er, es war, als sollte die Scham ihn überleben” (Kafka 2006: 193). Obierika, however, is unable to say more: his shaking voice and choking demonstrate that *the subaltern cannot speak* (see Spivak 1988), that is, the colonial system silences the colonized and messes with their linguistic production. Though one of the messengers shouts at Obierika, his linguistic resistance to colonial conquest and occupation is left untranslated, which saves him from imprisonment or worse.

In contrast to a dichotomous understanding of discourse and body, the dialogue demonstrates their complex fusion in the constitution of

racializing assemblages.<sup>5</sup> One of the material consequences of racialized discourse is the ontological negation and objectification of the Black body (see Fanon 1968). In contrast to the Igbos – and the (western) reader for whom Okonkwo’s death is that of the tragic hero –, for the Commissioner, the ontological reality of Okonkwo’s body is inexistent. Instead, the Commissioner dehumanizes the corpse, divesting it of its materiality and humanity as he turns it into the foundation of his (to use Mbembe’s term) necropolitical discourse. In this way, in the space of the *obi*, in addition to the linguistic interaction among the commissioner and the Igbos, the dead body, the inner monologue, the unwritten book, colonial weaponry, the grief and the powerlessness of the colonized collide in a racializing assemblage.

*Colonial discourse: dialogue among the colonizers*

In the dialogue, I focus on the use of colonial discourse in the segregated space of the British club. I argue that with the help of different discourse strategies white characters construe themselves as agents of Western civilization and the colonized as an absolute Other.

The British Council Man and Mr. Green, Obi’s boss, discuss Obi’s trial in standard British English. After making sure no African servers are around, they let loose.

- (2) “I cannot understand why [Obi] did it,” said the British Council man thoughtfully. He was drawing lines of water with his finger on the back of his mist-covered glass of ice-cold beer.
- “I can,” said Mr. Green simply. “What I can’t understand is why people like you refuse to face facts.” Mr. Green was famous for speaking his mind. He wiped his red face with the white towel on his neck. “The African is corrupt through and through.” The British Council man looked about him furtively, more from instinct than necessity, for although the club was now open to them technically, few Africans went to it. On this particular occasion there was none, except of course the stewards who served unobtrusively. It was quite possible to go in, drink, sign a cheque, talk to friends and leave again without noticing these stewards in their white uniforms. If everything went right you did not see them.
- “They are all corrupt,” repeated Mr. Green. “I’m all for equality and all that. I for one would hate to live in South Africa. But equality won’t alter facts.”

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<sup>5</sup> Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) notion of assemblage, Weheliye (2014: 4) develops a theory of racializing assemblages, taking race as „a set of sociopolitical processes that discipline humanity into full humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans.” Pennycook (2018: 54) argues that the notion of semiotic assemblage „gives us a way to address the complexity of things that come together in the vibrant, changeable exchanges of everyday life. [...] this allows for an appreciating of a much wider range of linguistic, artefactual, historical and spatial resources brought together in particular assemblages in particular moments of time and space.” My understanding of the racializing assemblages takes as its starting point a momentary constellation of diverse resources which is nonetheless defined and organized by the logic of racialization.

- “What facts?” asked the British Council man, who was relatively new to the country. There was a lull in the general conversation, as many people were now listening to Mr. Green without appearing to do so.
- “The fact that over countless centuries the African has been the victim of the worst climate in the world and of every imaginable disease. Hardly his fault. But he has been sapped mentally and physically. We have brought him Western education. But what use is it to him? He is ...” (NLAE 11)

Mr. Green speaks to the colonial ideology underpinned by scientific racism: Africans are biologically „corrupt.” In his estimation, „African” climate and diseases determine the being of the African (continent), for whom time stands still; there can be no progress, civilization or modernization (cf. Wilderson 2010: 283f). The British Council man’s and the Judge’s racial discourse is less obviously motivated by biological racism and the construction of Africa/ns as outside of time: failing to acknowledge the structural inequalities at the foundation of the colonial system, they cannot understand why a young man of education and brilliant promise took a bribe.

In the white supremacist space, white speakers and their racial discourse, Black servers and the beer glass come together in what Weheliye (2014) and Pennycook (2018) would call a racial assemblage. In contrast to the multisensorial perception of the ice-cold beer and the lines the British Council man is drawing on his mist-covered glass, these white men do not notice the Black servers. The narrator’s comment (*If everything went right you did not see them*) reinforces what the dialogue suggests, namely, that colonial discourse is predicated upon the invisibility of Africans. At the center of the construction of the African as absolutely Other and a void is not simply racial discourse but the complex ways in which bodies, material objects, racial discourses interact in a racial assemblage. In the quotation above, the materiality of the beer is more real and resonant than that of the Africans’ presence.

#### *Linguistic dominance: dialogue between colonizer and colonized*

In analyzing the exchange between judge and lawyer at the Lagosian High Court, I focus on the linguistic implications of colonial hierarchy, examining the tropes of racial discourse and the psycholinguistic effects of discursive violence.

Standard English is the language of the courts and of the colonial masters who sit in judgment of the colonized. In this passage, the colonial inflections of standard British English are marked. When Mr. Adayemi, the Nigerian lawyer, arrives late, the English judge reprimands him using a direct question in standard English.

(3) “This court begins at nine o’clock. Why are you late?”

Whenever Mr. Justice William Galloway, Judge of the High Court of Lagos and the Southern Cameroons, looked at a victim he fixed him with his gaze as a collector fixes his insect with formalin. He lowered his head like a charging ram and looked over his gold-rimmed spectacles at the lawyer.

“I am sorry, Your Honor,” the man stammered. “My car broke down on the way.” The judge continued to look at him for a long time. Then he said very abruptly:

“All right, Mr. Adeyemi. I accept your excuse. But I must say I’m getting sick and tired of these constant excuses about the problem of locomotion.” (NLAE 9)

His verbal rebuke is emphasized by embodied phenomena: the metaphors of the collector and the charging ram suggest that the white gaze is an integral part of fixing and disciplining the colonized subject. He assumes the role of the benign patron when he accepts the council’s excuse, but nonetheless interprets it as a sign of the African’s incurable laziness and lateness. The phrase „the problem of locomotion” successfully articulates his distaste for the colonized quarters of Lagos – as if what he conceives of as the poverty, dirt and overpopulation of these peripheral spaces would defile the dignity of the High Court and hinder its efficiency. In the colonial context, the use of the Latinate term not only signals the speaker’s educational level and superior status but is also used to distance himself from the reality of Lagos and that of the colonized.

The dialogue illustrates how the colonizer positions himself as an objective, rational and superior subject – in opposition to the perceived irrationality, animality and infantilism of the colonized. The animal metaphors employed by colonial discourse construct the colonized as a wild animal – devoid of the capacity to reason – to be surveilled, hunted down and collected by the colonizer (see Mbembe 2001). This ‘grammar of animality’ (in Gossett’s terms) projects onto the world of the colonized the absence of Western reason and order. This racialized conception is dismantled by the way in which the novel represents the life of Nigerians and the functioning of the colonial system.

Under the joint weight of colonial discourse and gaze, Mr. Adayemi comes undone: in spite of his obvious mastery of the colonial language and habitus<sup>6</sup>, he can but stammer in response to the accusations. As a result of the capture of colonial power, he cannot oppose the Judge’s racialized stereotypes, he breaks off after apologizing.

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<sup>6</sup> Bourdieu’s (1991) notion of habitus theorizes a pre-conscious, embodied and class-specific way of speaking implanted in the speaker through the process of socialization.

### **The orality and performance of Igbo culture in *No Longer at Ease***

In the Igbo culture, proverbs contain folk experiences and wisdom, encapsulating the community's values, traditions, beliefs and mythologies. There are approximately forty proverbs in *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer at Ease*. However, due to space constraints, I cannot analyze each one. Although Igbo proverbs frequently involve code-switching<sup>7</sup>, Achebe typically translates them into English, signaling the transition to traditional thought and the oral tradition through code-switching into the local languages or Africanized English.

Oral culture and its articulation through the medium of language are at the basis of Igbo tribal identity. Oral forms of expression express allegiance to tribal values, traditions, beliefs and mythologies on the one hand, and enunciate urban, collective wisdom, Lagosian/Nigerian identity on the other hand. Accordingly, in *No Longer at Ease* I interpret Igbo/Yoruba forms of oral expression as performative iterations of metrolinguistic practice (Pennycook & Otsuji 2015). Metrolinguism addresses everyday linguistic practices in relation to the city, showing how the spaces and rhythms of the city operate in relation to language (Pennycook 2016: 205). The uptake of oral culture in the context of urban space results in hybridized or mixed language practices: tribal and Christian, indigenous and English, village and urban, traditional and capitalist. The performance of spatialized, locally embedded and recontextualized oral genres can create transcultural meanings, that is, semantics that go beyond the fusion of several, separate cultures.

#### *Igbo proverbs as metrolinguism*

I read the following exchange in terms of metrolinguism, which endows the rivalry between colonial politicians with meanings and identities characteristic of the Igbo community.

- (4) The news of the day was about the Minister of Land who used to be one of the most popular politicians until he took it into his head to challenge the national hero.

“He is a foolish somebody,” said one of the men in English.

“He is like the little bird *nza* who after a big meal so far forgot himself as to challenge his *chi* to single combat,” said another in Ibo.<sup>8</sup> (*NLAE* 152)

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<sup>7</sup> Code-switching refers to speakers changing between languages or linguistic varieties (see Gumperz 1982, among many others). Motives behind code-switching include the following: the expression of collective consciousness, tribal identity and values, signaling the speaker's relationship to the listener (see also Sayahi 2004).

<sup>8</sup> *Nza* small bird; *chi* in the Igbo religion personal God defending the individual (in the glossary: *personal God*). The same proverb appears in *TEA* where it characterizes Okonkwo who is convicted for beating his wife during the week of peace: „They called [Okonkwo] the little bird *nza* who so far forgot himself after a heavy meal that he challenged his *chi*” (31).

The expression (*He is a foolish somebody*) reflects the pidginized use of Nigerian English. The narrative indicates that the character is speaking in Igbo when relating the proverb, but the reader is reading Achebe's Africanized English translation of the original Igbo proverb. The Igbo lexical items (*nza, chi*) make visible a textual relationship to the tribal, precolonial past and its contemporary colonial meaning, and underscore the survival and preservation of the indigenous stylistic habitus. The code-switching underscores the applicability of traditional, tribal wisdom to the colonial state while also creating an ethnocultural community among Igbo speakers. Conceived of as a language event, the proverb is no longer tied to a fixed position in the Igbo community or village but has migrated to the space of the city and become a resource in the linguistic repertoires of Lagosian Igbo speakers.

#### *The cultural meanings of Igbo proverbs*

In the following dialogue, the Igbo proverb expresses Joseph's attitudes, feelings and expectations regarding the situation, constructs an ethnocultural identity and contests the position he occupies in sociolinguistic hierarchies.

Obi and his friend, Joseph Okeke, went to the Umuofia Central School. Joseph did not finish high school; he works as a clerk in the Survey Department. After Obi returns from England, Joseph offers him a place to live and helps him readjust to Lagos. At his job interview for the Public Service Commission, Obi is angered by the Chairman's „idiotic” question regarding the taking of bribes, for, according to Obi, were he to plan on taking bribes, he'd be an idiot to admit it before this board. Joseph, however, is not pleased with Obi's conduct during the interview.

- (5) [Joseph's] opinion was that a man in need of a job could not afford to be angry.  
 “That's what I call colonial mentality.”  
 “Call it what you like,” said Joseph in Ibo. “You know more book than I, but I am older and wiser. And I can tell you that a man does not challenge his *ch<sup>p</sup>* to a wrestling match.” (NLAE 44)

The pidginized translation of the Igbo saying (*You know more book than I*) refers to Obi's Western education. Although Joseph admits Obi's superior social status and linguistic competence, he counterbalances it with African values such as age, wisdom and local knowledge, thereby bringing into focus Igbo tradition and identity. Code-switching to Igbo allows Joseph to emphasize an Igbo identity, appropriating the rhetorical force of indigenous practices and values systems. The use of the Igbo proverb („a

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<sup>9</sup> See footnote (3).

man does not challenge his *chi* to a wrestling match”) enables the discursive triumph of local culture over against the supremacy of colonial culture. By alluding to tribal African values, he appeals to the repertoires and traditions shared by the two Igbo speakers. In the text, the co-presence of standard and non-standard English allows for the vernacular use of multiple codes – the simultaneous incorporation of Igbo wisdom into standard English ideology and the refusal of standard language ideology through the use of Igboized morphosyntax and lexis.

### *Igbo orality in the construction of identity*

I look at how oral performance connected with code-switching constructs meaning and identity, particularly, the interaction between local and English resources.

Obi’s other friend, Christopher, belongs to the educated Lagosian elite. In the wake of his fiancé’s abortion and her refusal to see him, Christopher advises Obi not to try to see Clara again until she cools down. Part of the reason is that Clara is an *osu*, an outcast, with whom contact and marriage are not advisable.

- (6) “She will come round,” said Christopher. “Give her time.” Then he quoted in Ibo the words of encouragement which the bedbug was said to have spoken to her children when hot water was poured on them all. She told them not to lose heart because whatever was hot must in the end turn cold. (NLAE 148)

Christopher uses English idioms (*she will come round, give her time*) to discourage his friend from seeing Clara before switching to Igbo when relating the wisdom of the folk tale. The code-mixing highlights the points of contact between two cultural practices and traditions. The juxtaposition of the indigenous and the colonial speech genres calls attention to their formal differences as well as the transcultural semantics of the quoted wisdom.

### **Pidgin performance and stylization**

In multilingual Lagos, Nigerian/Lagosian pidgin is the lingua franca spoken by all ethnicities. Whereas standard English – be it British or Nigerian – is the language of power, pidgin is the language of Nigerian/Lagosian identity, collectivity, urban wisdom and anticolonial critique. In what follows, I will be focusing on the ways in which pidgin performance and stylization construe identity.

*Pidgin proverbs as Lagosian wisdom*

In the excerpt below, we can see that in the linguistic repertoires of Lagosian characters pidgin maxims appear alongside Igbo proverbs.

- (7) Ibo people, in their fair-mindedness, have devised a proverb which says that it is not right to ask a man with elephantiasis of the scrotum to take on smallpox as well, when thousands of other people have not had even their share of small diseases. No doubt it is not right. But it happens. “Na so dis world be” [This is the way the world is],<sup>10</sup> they say. (NLAE 97)

Similarly to the Igbo proverbs, pidgin sayings are imbued with a strong aural effect. The above example illustrates that some of these proverbs thematize new experiences having to do with migration to and life in the metropolis (poverty, crowdedness etc.). In fact, Zabus (1991: 75) notes that pidgin has „developed an as yet tiny arsenal of maxims and urban saws which complement the original proverbs or stand on their own.” Zabus’s observations are supported by Achebe’s text, for pidgin sayings often supplement Igbo proverbs. The pidgin aphorism reinforces the spirit of collectivism inscribed in the logic of the Igbo proverb; the meanings of the two proverbs activate and influence each other. The doubling up of the proverbs creates a sense of continuity and complementarity between tribal and urban life.

*Pidgin use in an interethnic speech situation*

I analyze the community-building function of pidgin use in the following interethnic speech situation. I interpret the fictional pidgin use as translingual and transcultural practice which goes beyond the given tribe’s cultural values and identity, imparts collective wisdom and creates Lagosian/Nigerian identity.

On the way to Lagos, near Ibadan, Obi is forced to swerve his car in order to avoid colliding with two mammy wagons. One of these mammy wagons stops, its driver and passengers help Obi get his car out of the bush. The women are crying, the driver and the passengers use Yoruba or pidgin English to try to calm down Obi.

- (8) “You very lucky-o,” said the driver and his passengers, some in English and others in Yoruba. “Dese [these] reckless drivers,” he said shaking his head sadly. “*Olorun!*” He left the matter in the hands of God. “But you lucky-o as no big

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<sup>10</sup> For the purposes of intelligibility, the transcription of the pidgin into standard English can be found in square brackets. Nwachukwu C. Obinna, native speaker and culturally embedded informant, assisted me in the analysis of Nigerian English and pidgin, and in the Nigerian pidgin transcriptions.

tree de for dis [this] side of road. When you reach home make you tank [thank] your God.” [...]

“Na Lagos you de go?” [Is it Lagos you’re going to?] asked the driver. Obi nodded, still unable to talk.

“Make you take am [him] *jeje* [gently]. Too much devil de for dis [this] road. If you see one accident way we see for Abeokuta side—*Olorun!*” The women talked excitedly, with their arms folded across their breasts, gazing at Obi as if he was a miracle. One of them repeated in broken English that Obi must thank God. A man agreed with her. “Na [it is] only by God of power na him make you still de talk” [that you’re still able to talk]. Actually Obi wasn’t talking, but the point was cogent nonetheless.

“Dese [these] drivers! Na waya for dem.” [How could they be like this?]

“No be [not] all drivers de [are] reckless,” said the good driver. “Dat [that] one na [is] foolish somebody. I give am [him] signal make him no overtake [not to overtake me] but he just come [did it anyway] *fiam* [at lightning speed].” The last word, combined with a certain movement of the arm meant *excessive speed*.<sup>11</sup> (NLAE 132–133)

A *mammy wagon* is a Nigerian mode of transportation which creates a culturally coded and embedded space, particularly in the wake of the accident, when its driver, passengers and Obi form an interethnic community.

A further feature of the dialogue is that its setting is the road in between Lagos and Ibadan. Its geographical coordinates behoove that the majority of passengers is Yoruba; in their ‘linguaging’ Yoruba is mixed with Nigerian pidgin. Informal and performative ways of talking, embodied and multimodal communal practices emerge almost immediately: while the men are united in their effort to fix up Obi’s car, the women are crying; their arms enclosing their breasts. Once assured that Obi is unscathed, they thank Olorun, thus invoking Yoruba tradition. Regardless of Obi’s Igbo identity, many of them invite him to perform traditional rituals of gratitude (*When you reach home make you tank your God, Obi must thank God*). Metrolingual themes come to the forefront of the dialogue, for example, blaming bad drivers and asking for Olorun’s help in accepting them. The incorporation of ethnoculturally specific content into the use of pidgin contributes to the emergence of interethnic, translingual<sup>12</sup> communication. The mashing of traditional and modern, tribal and urban practices creates a transcultural space. The improvisatory and oral speech genres, related to the traditional community, the informal economy and urban life, are capable of imbuing the speech event with a transcultural dynamic.

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<sup>11</sup> *Olorun* is the God of heavens in Yoruba mythology; a pidgin expression which derives from Yoruba: *jeje* gentle/gently, polite(ly); *fiam* the expression accompanied by a specific hand gesture means „at lightening speed.”

<sup>12</sup> Translingual practices go beyond the monolingual/multilingual dichotomy, referring to „the strategies of engaging with diverse codes” (Canagarajah 2013: 8).

*Performative Lagosian exchanges*

In the following exchange, the mixing of Yoruba and British English creates a specifically urban Lagosian identity. As a result of translingual practices, the culture and performance of orality is recontextualized in the colonial metropolis.

Achebe represents a segregated colonial metropolis. Ikoyi is the affluent district of European settlers; Africans live in the rest of the city. To quote Fanon (1963: 38), „The zone where the natives live is not complimentary to the zone inhabited by the settlers.” The city belonging to the colonized is characterized by poverty, overcrowding, poor road conditions and reckless driving. In many cases, the lanes for motor vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists may not be delineated, as the sidewalks may be missing. For the above reasons, traffic jams and stoppages, and the performative practices of verbal duels, ritualized insults among passengers and drivers are frequent (see also Quayson 2014).

Obi, who had recently moved back to Nigeria, has not acclimated to local conditions yet and feels alienated from Lagosian urban culture. In the next verbal fight, the Yoruba taxi driver loses his patience when Obi – upon seeing a group of drummers and young women – slows down his car:

- (9) A taxi driver hooted impatiently and overtook him, leaning out “at the same time to shout: “*Ori oda*,<sup>13</sup> your head no correct!” “*Ori oda*—bloody fool!” replied Obi. (NLAE 24)

The force of the Yoruba insult (*Ori oda*) is intensified by its translation into Lagosian pidgin (*your head no correct*). Rather than responding in Igbo, Obi replicates the familiar Yoruba insult, reinforcing the driver’s implication that the conflict is not an ethnic one. In addition to the repetition of the Yoruba insult, he talks back with the iconic British put-down (*bloody fool*) thus invigorating the performative nature of the exchange. The use of the British invective in Lagosian urban space and its incorporation into culturally embedded metrolingual practices creates a Third space between Nigeria and England.

*Pidgin as the language of urban legends and practices*

In the following exchange, I interpret Lagosian pidgin as the linguistic medium of urban legends and metrolingual identity.

- (10) Obi used to wonder why so many dogs were killed by cars in Lagos, until one day the driver he had engaged to teach him driving went out of his way to run over

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<sup>13</sup> *Ori oda* means in Yoruba *You’re out of your mind*.

one. In shocked amazement Obi asked why he had done it. “Na good luck” [this is good luck], said the man. “Dog bring good luck for new car. But duck be different. If you kill duck you go get accident or kill man.” (NLAE 22)

The Lagosian driver education teacher inducts his disciple into the local language and semiotic practices, explaining the urban myth to the estranged Obi: whereas running over a dog brings the driver good luck, running over a duck brings bad luck. In urban space, pidgin use thus emerges as translingual practice.

The pidgin maxim (*Na good luck*) arises out of a process that originates in the complexly interwoven actions among human agents, automobiles, roads, and animal bodies. Metrolinguism cannot be separated from the embodied practices or from the urban spaces in which these practices are embedded. What we see is that the material features of the assemblage and the „linguistic and embodied practices align to produce a culturally meaningful whole” (Bucholtz – Hall 2016: 180).

The language of urban culture and modernity is Lagosian pidgin, which is used to authenticate Lagosian identity. This Lagosian identity is further emphasized by the fact that the ethnolinguistic identity of most minor characters is not clarified. According to Bamiro (1994), pidgin use in the Nigerian English novel signifies characters’ social status and standing as well as giving local color to the setting. Zabus (2007: 83f) argues that in the West African novel pidgin is represented as a stigmatized linguistic variety characterizing uneducated speakers and an auxiliary language expressing switches between standard and Nigerian English. In contrast to Bamiro’s and Zabus’s arguments, the use and function of pidgin is much more nuanced in *No Longer at Ease*: major and minor, educated and (presumably) uneducated characters alike use Nigerian/Lagosian pidgin. Moreover, pidgin does not merely perform the function of code-switching.

#### *Pidgin performance at the hospital*

In the following dialogue, Obi is looking for his fiancé, Clara, after her abortion. In the waiting room, the pidgin performances appeal to the other patients as they critique the colonial elite.

- (11) Obi told the attendant that he was not a patient and that he had an urgent appointment with the doctor. [...]  
“What kin’ appointment you get with doctor when you no be patient?” [What kind of appointment do you have with the doctor when you’re not a patient?] she asked. Some of the waiting patients laughed and applauded her wit.  
“Man way no sick de come see doctor?” [What kind of man comes to the doctor who is not sick?] she repeated for the benefit of those on whom the subtlety of the original statement might have been lost. [...]  
When Obi came out, one of the patients was waiting to have a word with him.

“You tink because Government give you car you fit do what you like? You see all of we de wait here and you just go in. You tink na play we come play?” [You think we come here to play?]

Obi passed on without saying a word.

“Foolish man. He think say because him get car so derefore he can do as he like. [Because he thinks he has a car he can do anything.] Beast of no nation!”  
 (NLAE 142–143)

The attendant’s use of pidgin – which dismisses Obi’s use of standard (Nigerian) English – establishes rapport between herself and the other patients. In order to maximize the impact of her speech performance, she continues styling in pidgin, where pidgin functions as the language of authority and collectivism. Obi refuses to answer her and cuts the line. On his way out from the doctor, one of the patients is ready to have it out with him. Obi, however, refuses to engage him, presumably due to his mental state or shame; in response to which the patient begins to discuss Obi in the third person, addressing his performative tirade to the rest of the patients. Obi earns the status of „beast” because he holds no allegiance to Nigeria/ns, treating the colonized as second-class citizens. The term *beast of no nation* expresses the speaker’s anger and frustration with the colonial elite. This pidgin expression appears in Wole Soyinka’s *Season of Anomy* (1974) and Uzodinma Iweala’s *Beasts of No Nation* (2005) as well as Fela Kuti’s album of the same title. Here it can be interpreted as a form of anticolonial mimicry<sup>14</sup>, since it appropriates the animality attributed to the colonized (see dialogue (3)) to express the homelessness and the alienation of the colonial elite.

#### *The use of pidgin and masculinist Africanist discourse*

Through this dialogue, I examine the ways in which the sociocultural implications and meanings of pidgin use change in light of the dialogue’s progression, specifically in the reinforcement of gender hierarchies. I posit that code-sliding between pidgin and standard English can indicate the speaker’s approaching or distancing themselves from their interlocutors.

Obi’s friend, Christopher, doesn’t consider himself to be an idealist; he is a pragmatist who thinks that he is able to succeed in Lagos because of his competence to mix and match the resources of the Nigerian and colonial cultures. In the dialogue below, Obi and Christopher plan on going out with their girlfriends, Bisi and Clara.

(12) “Make we go dance somewhere?”

Obi tried to make excuses, but cut him short. They would go, she said.

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<sup>14</sup> By producing an excess or slippage (almost the same, *but not quite*), the mimicry of colonial discourse emerges as an elusive and ambivalent strategy of appropriation (see Bhabha 2010).

“Na film I wan’ go” [I want to go to this film], said Bisi.  
“Look here, Bisi, we are not interested in what you want to do. It’s for Obi and me to decide. This na [is] Africa, you know.”  
Whether Christopher spoke good or “broken” English depended on what he was saying, where he was saying it, to whom and how he wanted to say it. Of course that was to some extent true of most educated people, especially on Saturday nights. But Christopher was rather outstanding in thus coming to terms with a double heritage. (*NLAE* 106–107)

Christopher asks in Lagosian pidgin whether they feel like going out dancing. Clara – who studied to be a nurse in London – replies that they would go, but Bisi states her preference in pidgin. To explain that her preference doesn’t matter, Christopher switches back to standard English, as if implying that she had misunderstood the urban, egalitarian spirit created by pidgin use. He uses the idiom of the colonizer to silence her, the enforcement of his linguistic dominance serves to reinforce and reimplement the gender hierarchies between the speakers. After standardized usage, the pidgin maxim (*This na Africa*) authenticates the gender order in the name of the imaginary community of Africa. The pidgin styling indirectly comments on the need to localize sociocultural phenomena: gender equality may be found in England, but not here, because „this is Africa.” And neither the women’s linguistic competence nor their educational record is going to change that. In this speech situation, the use of standard English authenticates the masculinist Africanist discourse while pidgin use authenticates traditional patriarchal values.

The narrator claims that Christopher is master of the translingual repertoires of educated Nigerians: he can adroitly use standard and nonstandard varieties, mix and slide among diverse codes in a manner which not only suits the given interaction, but assists him in achieving his symbolic goals. Even more interesting is the claim that such ‘performative competence’ (in Canagarajah’s terms) is especially true of the Lagosian elite on „Saturday nights.” If we’re to take the narrator at his word, Saturday nights can be classified as leisure time in the colonial metropolis, signifying the conquest of the capitalist neoliberal lifestyle.

#### *Standard English and pidgin styling in the office*

The phone conversation below demonstrates that the use of standard English can signify belonging to the Nigerian elite. Analyzing the conversation between Joseph and his coworkers, I aim to characterize the Lagosian identity created by mixing standard and pidgin English.

- (13) “You will not forget to call for me?” [Joseph] asked.  
“Of course not,” said Obi. “Expect me at four.”  
“Good! See you later.” Joseph always put on an impressive manner when speaking on the telephone. He never spoke Ibo or pidgin English at such moments.

When he hung up he told his colleagues: “That na [is] my brother. Just return from overseas. B. A. (Honors) Classics.” He always preferred the fiction of Classics to the truth of English. It sounded more impressive.  
 “What department he de [does] work?”  
 “Secretary to the Scholarship Board.”  
 “E go make plenty money there [He’s going to make a lot of money there]. Every student who wan’ [wants to] go England go de see am for house.” [Every student who wants to go to England is going to go to his home.]  
 “E no be like dat” [He’s not like that], said Joseph. “Him na [he is a] gentleman. No fit take bribe. [He doesn’t take bribes.]”  
 “Na so” [yeah right], said the other in disbelief. (*NLAE* 77)

The language of the phone conversation between Obi and his childhood friend Joseph is standard English. The narrator’s comment regarding the „impressive manner” Joseph uses when speaking on the telephone enables us to read the exchange as an everyday performance which takes place in the space of the office. On the telephone, both officials (the higher-ranking Obi and the lower-ranking Joseph) are consciously using standard English and avoiding nonstandard and Igbo features.

As soon as they get off the phone, Joseph changes from standard English to pidgin, mixing it up with the standard variety when discussing Obi’s fictitious degree in Classics. Through his friendship to Obi and the performative use of prestigious linguistic varieties, he appropriates ‘Englishness’, establishing a direct relationship to it as a place and laying claim to the symbolic capital of the motherland’s educational institutions. Joseph’s speech creates the effect of improvisation, but it is in fact a deliberately and consciously planned performance utilizing rhetorical elements. Perhaps because „the truth of English” in Nigeria is an ordinary fact of life, he cultivates the impressiveness of Obi’s Classics degree and invokes the romance of the recent returnee. In asserting „impressiveness” as one of the main characteristics of quotidian postcolonial performances, the narrator suggests that the oppositions animating this ‘act of identity’ are: construction and improvisation; reality and fictitiousness; authenticity and inauthenticity; identification and dis-identification (cf. Coupland 2001).

In contradistinction to Bamiro’s (1994) and Zabus’s (2007) arguments, I argue that pidgin language use should be understood in the context of the ‘dialect stylistics’ model. Based on the above analyses, the social meanings associated with Nigerian/Lagosian pidgin use are not predetermined but based on situational, contextually dependent languaging. Joseph’s pidgin stylization, for example, which strategically employs superstandard lexicon, allows him to fashion a Lagosian identity which mimics the spontaneity as well as the rootedness of the local metropolitan culture. The use of the pidgin vernacular enables Joseph to affirm comradery with his co-workers. When his colleague wants to extend the practice of taking bribes to Obi, Joseph expresses the corruption of the state department using a pidginized variety. Joseph contests his colleague’s accusation in pidgin,

arguing that Obi is not like the rest. His pointed use of the term „gentleman” uses the authority of colonial discourse and prestige of ‘Englishness’ to distance himself from the persona of the corrupt(ible) African bureaucrat. His interlocutor’s pidginized rejoinder is ambiguous: it performs politeness strategies while nonetheless questioning Nigerian civil servants’ ability to abide by codes of honor and collective norms.

## Conclusion

The analysis of dialogues in colonial-era Nigerian novels suggests that differential access to the prestigious linguistic varieties signifies, reproduces and reinforces power differences; language use plays a significant part in the construction of racial differences. For instance, in *Things Fall Apart*, standard (white) English use signals white identity and colonial privilege. In *No Longer at Ease*, the function of standard English becomes more differentiated: as its role in the signification and construction of the local elite’s identity becomes important, it no longer functions as an absolute marker of white identity. In both novels, Igbo, Yoruba, Igboized / Africanized English emphasizes culturally specific values, norms, and speech genres. In *No Longer at Ease*, Nigerian/Lagosian pidgin appears as the language of collectivism, folk and urban wisdom. Typically, the use of pidgin signifies and constructs Nigerian, Lagosian, and interethnic identities.

The colonized characters cannot always resist white dominance embedded in the structural hierarchies of colonial power. In both novels, (linguistic) dominance is anchored in the colonizers’ standard English language repertoire as well as their economic, political and social situation. Not even those colonized characters possessing the requisite linguistic repertoire can talk back to empire or its agents.

From the analysis of dialogues, it is clear that characters do not simply signal or represent an *a priori* „Igbo,” „Nigerian,” „African” or „English” identity. Particularly in the transitional period depicted in *No Longer at Ease*, certain aspects of tribal culture and identity are called into question; characters are actively and performatively, creatively and consciously using sociolinguistic resources to fashion multifaceted and transitory identities.

Educated Nigerian characters use the linguistic capital of standard English as a sociolinguistic resource to achieve social mobility and to gain access to positions of power. The display of linguistic/performative competence can be accompanied by the conscious avoidance or the incorporation of vernacular forms. Through code-switching, -mixing, -mashing, and -sliding, colonized characters can express their values, identities and dynamically shifting relationships with their conversational partners. The

mixing of local and English speech genres can create transcultural meanings and identities.

Igbo and Yoruba proverbs create ethnocultural meanings associated with the tribal community in question, interpreting the given situation in terms of collective wisdom. Using traditional proverbs can signal ethnocultural belonging and/or urban affiliations. In the urban space, traditional Igbo, Yoruba and pidgin proverbs can signify the speaker's expectations, emotions, attitudes and identity, and their relationship to the urban space and their speech partners. The identity thus created can go beyond the boundaries of traditional culture and community, enabling the emergence of transcultural identities. Pidgin proverbs, in particular, thematize migratory and metropolitan experiences. The traditional resources of oral culture are reframed and recontextualized in the colonial city; pidgin performance and stylization can function as a form of metrolingual and translingual practice.

The paper demonstrated that pidgin languaging can be understood in the context of the 'dialect stylistics' model. The following oppositions animate pidgin stylization: construction and improvisation; reality and fictitiousness; authenticity and inauthenticity; subjectivity and alienation; identification and dis-identification (cf. Coupland 2001). In addition to these oppositions, pidgin stylization is animated by the following ambivalences, referred to by Moten (2003), Fanon (2006) and Hartman (1997) as objectification and humanization, violence and pleasure, performance and routine, spectator and spectacle, the scene of subjection and radical performativity. Not every single opposition manifests in every act of stylization; analysis of the given discursive situation is necessary to establish the significance of each category.

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