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**LANDSCAPING POSTCOLONIALITY: THE DISSEMINATION OF
ANGLOPHONE CAMEROON LITERATURE**

By

Joyce B. Abunaw

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of
New York.**

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Abstract

LANDSCAPING POSTCOLONIALITY: THE DISSEMINATION OF ANGLOPHONE CAMEROON LITERATURE

By

Joyce B. Abunaw

Adviser: Professor David Greetham

This dissertation examines publishing, distribution and reading of Anglophone Cameroon literature. Cameroon has a population of 14.7 million (1998 estimate) and Anglophone Cameroon forms about 20% of this number. Despite the presence of about 250 indigenous languages, English and French are the official languages. Consequently Anglophone Cameroon literature is surviving under the shadow of the dominant Francophone Cameroon literature. To make matters worse, the overall dissemination pattern of Anglophone African literature is further limiting the visibility of Anglophone Cameroon literature. This dissertation hinges on the premise that while multinational publishers like Heinemann brought African literature to a worldwide audience, they in turn jeopardized indigenous publishing on the continent. Since the multinational publishers have the means for wider dissemination, the texts they publish are more visible in Africa and the West. Hence in order to get a realistic picture of African literary writings, there is a need to examine indigenous publishing and the dissemination process in individual African Countries and territories. As a result, a current bibliography of Anglophone Cameroon literature is included in this dissertation as an appendix.

PREFACE

The idea for this dissertation started taking shape in my mind in 1991 when I was studying for a Masters in Librarianship at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth. It is during this time that I became aware that Anglophone Cameroon was largely undocumented. Each time I looked up Cameroon in reference sources, it was identified as a French-speaking country. Anglophone African Countries were Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone, and Zambia etc. Anglophone Cameroon was lost. When it came to literary sources, the same pattern occurred. When Albert Gerard was editing *European-Language Writing in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Anglophone Cameroon was omitted. In a last ditch effort to save the situation, Stephen Arnold wrote an informative but patronizing account on Anglophone Cameroon literature titled "Emergent English Writing in Cameroon" and it was included in the collection as an appendix to Nigerian Literature! Consequently this dissertation is the beginning of my modest contribution to document Anglophone Cameroon, particularly Anglophone Cameroon literature.

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I will forever remain indebted to my late parents, George and Catherine Ashuntantang for nurturing in me the love for books and their enduring faith in female education. I want to seize this opportunity to acknowledge members of my maternal and paternal families who have played parents to me since that ghastly car accident in 1986, particularly my siblings, Martha Zama née Ashuntantang (M.ED), Gloria Ashuntantang (MBBS, DSSC, MD), Tanjong Ashuntantang (Barrister at Law), Helen Ashuntantang (MPH/Doctor of Pharmacy Student), whose academic achievements and unconditional support continue to be a source of inspiration.

My gratitude also goes to my in-laws, the Abunaw and Etchu-Tanyo families in the United States and Cameroon for their encouragement and acceptance. The Anglophone Cameroon community in New York (particularly, Aunty Antonia, Moses and Nenna Akiri, Dr. Tar Moses, Pam and Ozong Etta, Joe Ndamukong, The Manchos, Musa, Philip Konsey, Gladys Toche, and Assumpta Tanifor) remained a source of warmth throughout the writing of this dissertation; to them, I say, “thank you”. I want to further acknowledge the following at the Graduate Center: Prof. Michelle Wallace, for black feminist thought, Prof. Meena Alexander for postcolonial theory, Profs. Louis Menand and Nancy Miller for the

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I reserve a standing ovation for my husband, David Ako Abunaw Jr., for his emotional and intellectual support during these very strenuous times. Finally, my love and unending gratitude go to my kids, David Ako Abunaw III (7yrs) and Tee Tanjong Abunaw (3yrs) for teaching me what is most important in life.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

BLAZING A TRAIL: CANON FORMATION AND THE DISSEMINATION OF AFRICAN LITERATURE.

There is a saying in Ibo that a man who can't tell where the rain began to beat him cannot know where he dried his body (Achebe, "Role of the writer", 8).

Where the rain began to beat: Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

This saying underscores the link between history and memory in forging new ideas. Thus, in order to frame literary canonization in Anglophone African Literature - the process which leads some literary works to be considered good and others denigrated, it is imperative to look at the circumstances surrounding the publication of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and the way this novel shaped the criteria used in judging "worthy" texts of African literature as a whole and how it largely created the pattern of dissemination for African literature.

Chinua Achebe is neither the first African writer, nor has he won the Nobel Prize for Literature award or the Booker Award, yet he remains the centripetal force behind the development of Anglophone African literature and the literary texts that are now considered the canon. Achebe is preceded in African literature by the numerous and often invisible producers of African oral literature. Even in print he has predecessors who wrote in African languages like Shaban Robert, the Tanzanian writer who wrote in Swahili, Thomas Mofolo in Sotho and D.O Fanguwa in Yoruba. In

the English Language too, Achebe has forebears. The earliest African writers to have written in English were probably Phyllis Wheatley and Olaudah Equiano who were brought into slavery as children. Phyllis Wheatly was renowned for her poetry and Oluadah Equiano published *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Oluadah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African Written by Himself in 1790 (?)*. In this book Equiano details his experiences as a slave and calls for the abolition of slavery. After Equiano a number of South Africans made it to print in English. The list includes, Thomas Mofolo, whose novel *Moeti oa Bochabela* in Sotho was published in English in 1920 as *The Pilgrim of the East*. Then came Sol. T. Plaatje whose *Mhudi* was published in 1930 and Peter Abrahams, who started off with a collection of short stories called *Dark Testament* and went on to write *Mine Boy*, *Song of City* and *Path of Thunder* in 1948.

Even in Nigeria, Achebe's country, he was preceded in print by Amos Tutuola. Faber and Faber, a renowned British publishing house, published Amos Tutuola's *Palmwine Drinkard* in 1952. *The Palmwine Drinkard* was written in basic English by a writer who had only acquired six years of primary education. Yet Tutuola's artistic quality and craftsmanship in storytelling did not go unnoticed. Dylan Thomas, in his often quoted review, held that *The Palmwine Drinkard* is:

The brief, thronged, grisly and bewitching story. Or series of stories written in young English by a west African, about a journey of an expert and devoted palmwine drinkard through a nightmare of indescribable adventures, all simply and carefully described in the bristling bush...The writing is nearly always terse and direct, strong, wry, flat and savoury; the big, and often comic, terrors are as near

and understandable as the numerous small details of price, size and number; and nothing is too prodigious or too trivial to put down in this tall, devilish story (The Observer, 6 July 1952).

Thomas' review drew attention to Tutuola's work. It was later reviewed in America by Eric Larrabee in the *Reporter* (12 May 1953), in the *New York Times Book Review* by Selden Rodman (20 September 1953) and in *The New Yorker* by Anthony West (December 1953) (qtd. in Larson, "*The Ordeal*"). These reviews for the most part highlighted Tutuola's English and style described in varying degrees as "naïve," "barbaric," and "primitive" and opened Tutuola to scrutiny and notoriety. These descriptions heaped on Tutuola did not sit well with western educated Africans, who felt that Tutuola was not representative of the African intellectual. In fact Bernth Lindfors holds that "Tutuola may owe much of his early notoriety to the endorsement of the famous Welsh poet" ("Critical perspectives", 3). Not only did critics have a problem with Tutuola's language, they took issue with his originality. Indeed, Babasola Johnson claimed that Tutuola's "stories are well known, and have been published in one form or another, most of his plots were borrowed from Fanguwa's *Ogboju Ode*. He (Tutuola) even gave himself away when he referred to this book in one of the chapters as 'the Brave hunter in the Bush of Ghosts'" (qtd. in Lindfors "Critical perspectives" 32).

In recent years Tutuola's reputation has been salvaged by critics who see him as a bridge between the oral tradition and the literary tradition. This is the point Obiechina underscores when he explains that

Tutuola has the ability to “assimilate elements peculiar to the oral tradition with elements peculiar to the literary tradition; in other words, to impose a literary organization upon essentially oral narrative material” (Obiechina 1990, 50). It is perhaps in this regard that Tutuola is considered as a transitional writer in the development of African literature and not a full-fledged novelist, hence losing his position to Achebe as the founding father of modern African literature. Despite the negative remarks about *The Palmwine Drinkard*, it still captured the fascination of western readers and it was immediately translated into three languages. This early notoriety, which exemplifies one process of canon formation, worked to the advantage of Amos Tutuola. A text has to be written about. It doesn't really matter what is written about the text. As long as it catches the attention of critics and is reviewed by prominent newspapers and magazines, its reputation or notoriety is assured and it will become part of the literary canon if the interest is sustained. Hence, even though Tutuola is not often credited as a founding figure in modern African literature, *The Palmwine Drinkard* is part of the canon of African literature.

The next writer to come to print after Tutuola was Cyprian Ekwensi, a Nigerian too. Ekwensi published *People of the City* in 1954. Ekwensi's concerns with the problems of urbanization were far removed from Tutuola's world of oral tradition. Critics found his work artistically flawed and Bernth Lindfors holds that Ekwensi is highly influenced by “third-rate American movies and fourth-rate British and American Paperback novels”

(Lindfors, "*Cyprian*" 2-14). Lindfors sums up the reception of these first two novels from Nigeria in this way: "Tutuola was too primitively African to satisfy African readers and Ekwensi too thoroughly westernized to satisfy European readers" (Lindfors, *Early Nigerian* 8-9). Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* provided a much-awaited middle ground.

Things fall Apart is undoubtedly the most important novel to come out of Sub-Saharan Africa to date. It is probably the most read and studied African creative work in Africa as well as the rest of the world. To confirm its wide dissemination, the novel has been translated into 32 languages. The work has also sold more than eight million copies (Heinemann 40-year celebration pamphlet, 2002).

Things Fall Apart tells the story of Okonkwo, who rises to prominence in Umuofia due to his hard work and physical prowess. Unfortunately, he is ruled by an overwhelming fear: the fear of being considered weak. In show of his masculinity and strength, Okonkwo kills Ikemefuna, a boy brought up under his care and also accidentally kills the son of a clansman. As punishment for the latter, he is exiled from Umuofia for seven years. During his absence, white missionaries and colonial administrators take control of Umuofia. When Okonkwo returns to Umuofia, he tries to rouse his warlike clan to resist the white man. As the clan assembles in a meeting to discuss the crisis, a messenger comes from the white man with a message to stop the meeting. Okonkwo swiftly beheads the messenger and instead of his people showing support, they

scatter in all directions. Convinced that Umuofia will not go to war against the white man, Okonkwo hangs himself. These are the bare threads of the story, enriched by Achebe's narrative skill, style and the evocation of indigenous Igbo culture.

The Path to Publication

In 1956, Achebe responded to an advertisement in a newspaper and sent the manuscript of *Things Fall Apart* to London. In London, the manuscript of *Things Fall Apart* made rounds in publishing houses but no one was willing to take the risk of publishing an African novel. Then the manuscript landed at William Heinemann publishers. Heinemann's normal fiction reader read it and made a long report but the firm was reluctant (Peterson, 150). Not knowing what decision to take, the top management sent it to their Education Books Division for an answer. They expected this division to figure out what to do with the manuscript since they had experience with selling books in Africa. As Alan Hill reports "I was the educational books director at Heinemann when Achebe's manuscript came into the office. I don't think he had any idea of the importance of what he had done. It did not occur to him that he was the first great African writer in the English Language" (Peterson, 150).

The manuscript was shown to one of the educational advisers, Professor Donald MacRae, who read it and wrote a twelve –word recommendation "This is the best first novel I have read since the war"

(Peterson, 150). Thus in 1958, Heinemann Educational Books published *Things Fall Apart*. Upon publication *Things Fall Apart* received a lot of attention in Britain and the USA. This fact in itself underscores that the initial audience of the novel was not African and that the judgment and approval of this African literature classic was carried out of Africa.

The reviews in the west for the most part were positive, although their anthropological overtone could not be missed. *The Times Literary Supplement* noted:

The great interest in this novel is that it genuinely succeeds in presenting tribal life from the inside. Patterns of feelings and attitudes appear clothed in a distinctive African imagery, written neither up nor down [...] his (Achebe's) literary method is apparently simple but a vivid imagination illuminates every page and his style is a model of clarity (qtd. in Hill, 121)

The *Times Literary Supplement* focuses here on the cultural mores presented from an African's point of view, which makes Achebe "genuinely succeed". Achebe had written a novel which had been acclaimed for its distinctive African texture: the setting was African, the characters were mostly African, the language was European but laced with indigenous rhetorical devices like riddles, folktales and proverbs. Unfortunately, the early critics did not regard *Things Fall Apart* as a real novel; they focused on anthropological and sociological details. R.C. Healy reviewing *Things Fall Apart* in *New York Herald Tribune* in 1959 claimed that the novel had "no sense of plot or development. Things simply happen one after another. This is plain and unvarnished storytelling in the best primitive

tradition, probably more impressive and important as an anthropological document than a novel" (8). David Hassoldt also acknowledges Achebe's skill in presenting Ibo culture effectively but charges that "the flashbacks in the book are confusing, the narration undisciplined" (18). Most of these critics were anthropologists but even literary critics also approached the text with myopia. They tried to fit *Things Fall Apart* within a Eurocentric novel tradition. Many of them argued that *Things Fall Apart* did not place importance on characterization. It used ethnological material instead of description. There was no convincing dialogue etc. Charles Larson, in *The Emergence of African Fiction*, argued that these misrepresentations emanated from the critics' lack of acquaintance with the indigenous literary devices Achebe employed to organize the contents of *Things Fall Apart* into an effective whole. Nevertheless, the praise for *Things Fall Apart* quickly drowned the negative criticism.

Diana Speed, writing in *Black Orpheus* May 1959, commented that:

The book as a whole creates for the reader such a vivid picture of Ibo life that the plot and characters are little more than symbols representing a way of life lost irrevocably within living memory. The quiet unpretentious prose, deceptively simple, lends credence to the activities of an agrarian community whose unquestioning acceptance of age-old moral values, customs, beliefs and fears make the society the entity it is...This is a piece of history; the reader feels the calamity on every purposeful and organized society in which the individual personality is not an end in itself but a contribution to a whole (50).

In this same regard G. Adali-Morty, in another issue of *Black Orpheus*, declared, "When comments on the content and style of the book must have been exhausted, its intangible beauty remains. Some may call

it magic; others the halo, the aroma, the charm or the unanalyzable quintessence which binds everything together in harmony and unity" (50). Shortly thereafter, as if to confirm all these comments, Chinua Achebe received The Margaret Wrong Memorial Prize for Literature in Africa. Writing about *Things Fall Apart*, Eustace Palmer declares that it "demonstrates a mastery of plot and structure, strength of characterization, competence in manipulation of language and consistency and depth of thematic exploration which is rarely found in a first novel" (63). In addition, Keith Booker calls it "an intricately crafted work" (66). Praise for *Things Fall Apart* is so overwhelming, leading Lizarribar Buxo to point out that "there is almost a singular lack of critique to balance out the novel's praises" (150).

***Things Fall Apart* And The Unwritten Standard**

There are certain factors that accounted for the impact of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* on the development of Anglophone African literature in particular and African Literature in general. To begin with, the story recorded an African past laced with dignity and respect, challenging stereotypes of Africans in European discourse. Furthermore, Achebe's handling of the English language pushed the frontiers of the "Queen's English", showing that English could unapologetically accommodate African experiences. In addition, Achebe's use of the novel genre proved successful in the enterprise of reconstructing new realities for Africa at the

dawn of independence. Finally, the phenomenal sales from *Things Fall Apart* showed that African writing was profitable as well.

In 1958 when Achebe published *Things Fall Apart*, African nations that had been under the bondage of colonialism were on the verge of independence and nationalism was rife. There was a need for African realities to be set in motion, realities removed from the stereotypes created by the ravages of colonialism. History had to be re-invented. As Gikandi has pointed out,

Achebe's seminal status in the history of African literature lies precisely in his ability to have realized that the novel provided a new way of reorganizing African cultures especially in the crucial juncture of transition from colonialism to national independence, and his fundamental belief that narrative can indeed propose an alternative world beyond the realities imprisoned in colonial and postcolonial relations of power. In other words, Achebe was possibly the first of our writers to recognize the function of the novel not solely as a mode of representing reality, but one which had limitless possibilities of inventing a new national community (3).

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* thus recreated an African past which displayed complexity and dynamism. The village of Umuofia is governed by local laws and an administrative system that ensures decency and justice. There is elaborate religious order. Yet the people of Umuofia show religious tolerance by their overall kindness and courteousness towards the Christian religion introduced by Europeans. It is therefore in this celebration of the African past that Africans on the continent and in the Diaspora welcomed Achebe's first novel. By recreating recognizable human beings in the African landscape, Achebe challenged Conrad's jumping savages in *Heart of Darkness*, the docile, lazy and excessively

emotional Africans in Cary's *Mister Johnson* and other stereotypical images of Africans in western literature. Achebe was well aware of his purpose as a writer and confirmed this when he emphasized that:

I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past-with all its imperfections-was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them (72).

In fact as Achebe further claimed, African literature had the duty to espouse this:

That African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty that they had poetry and above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African people all but lost during the colonial period and it is this that they must now regain. The worst thing that can happen to any people is the loss of their dignity and self-respect. The writer's duty is to help regain it by showing them in human terms what happened to them, what they lost (Achebe "Role of writer" 8).

Besides emphasizing the value of the past, Achebe stretched the boundaries of the English language in a way no African writer had done. His novel was not replete with the grammatical errors of Tutuola but he infused Ibo patterns of speech in his novel. Hence *Things Fall Apart* makes use of abundant proverbs and similes drawn from the local environment, which gave the speech of his characters a distinct African flavor. The dexterity and skill with which a person conjures up proverbs to buttress a point in a debate or conversation becomes a measure of his wisdom. As Achebe explains in *Things Fall Apart*, "Among the Ibo the art of talking is taken seriously, and proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten" (7). Achebe was conscious of the contradiction inherent

in an African writing in the colonizer's language but he seemed to have found a way out. Thus Achebe explained that:

For an African, writing in English is not without its set-backs. He often finds himself describing situations or modes of thought which have no direct equivalent in the English way of life. Caught in that situation he can do one of two things. He can try and contain what he wants to say within the limits of conventional English or he can try to push back those limits to accommodate his ideas. The first method produces confident, uninspired and rather flat work. The second method can produce something new and valuable to the English language as well as to the material he is trying to put over ("The role" 12).

Achebe definitely makes use of the second method and countless examples abound in his works. Achebe's success in his use of English can be seen in the response from critics and the numerous writers who have followed his style. G. Adaly Morty, reviewing *Things Fall Apart* in 1959, said of Achebe "He knows and uses English with consummate skill" and "His language has the ring and rhythm of poetry. At the background of the words can be heard thrumming syncopation of the sound of Africa-the gongs, the drums, the castanets and the horns (qtd. in Rand Bishop, 43). J.P. Clark also concurred by stating that if "there is a faithful reproduction of speech habits of one people into another, as Mr. Chinua Achebe does significantly in English with Ibo dialogue proceeding by technique of the proverb, then I think the artist has achieved a reasonable measure of success" (qtd. in Bishop, 44).

Thus most writers after Achebe followed Achebe's standard; the novel became the dominant genre and has come to be representative of African literature although it is the genre most alien to African culture.

Many novels after *Things Fall Apart*, including Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* (1966), T.M. Aluko's *One Man One Wife* (1959), Cyprian Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana* (1975), Ngugi Wa Thiongo's *Weep Not Child* all in varying degrees recaptured the essence of *Things Fall Apart* by exposing a vibrant culture and using English with an African coloration. Even when writers grappled with the disillusionment as a result of the betrayal from the leaders of the newly independent states as in *Wole Soyinka's The Interpreters* and Ayi Kwei Armah *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, the role of African literature as underscored by Achebe was at work. This also holds true for women writers who responded to Achebe not only by writing to recreate the dignity of the African past but the dignity of the African woman who had been denigrated further by stereotypical representations in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and other male authored texts. Hence Flora Nwapa's *Efuru*, (1966) and Grace Ogot's *The Promised Land* (1966) highlighted female characters, who presented a complexity that demanded to be acknowledged and respected. All these novels can now be comfortably called classics of African Literature. That is why C.L. Innes and Bernth Lindfors talk of the "school of Achebe" (6) and Lewis Nkosi holds that in Achebe's recreation of the past and his presentation of "history as the 'hero' of the novel, Achebe "blazed a trail large enough to be followed by other writers" (33). But Achebe did not only blaze a trail for African writers, he also blazed a trail for Heinemann Educational Publishers.

Publishing and Canonicity: Heinemann's African Writer's series

After the financial success of *Things Fall Apart*, Alan Hill, the then-Director at Heinemann Educational Books, now felt that other writers must exist where Achebe came from. So he undertook a trip to West Africa and of course found the potential he had hoped for, but they lacked "a publisher with the confidence and resources to launch them on a worldwide market" (Hill, 123). As Keith Sambrook, who joined the staff on the series in January 1963, explains:

The African writers series was started by Van Milne who had joined Heinemann to develop their African Publishing; he persuaded Alan Hill to back the idea in 1961, and was able to do this because Heinemann already had the copyright of the two earlier Achebe novels, *Things Fall Apart*, and *No Longer at Ease*, and he had got Cyprian Ekwensi to write *Burning Grass*, and worked with Kenneth Kaunda on *Zambia Shall Be Free*. Those were the first titles launched in 1962 (Peterson 151).

A written tradition of African literature in English had begun and the creation of a canon of African literature in English had begun too. However, the format existing at the time for fiction had to be altered if the books were to be financially accessible in Africa. Hence Heinemann made a decision:

The plan was to start a paperback series, confined to black African authors; the books were to be attractively designed with high quality production and sold at a cheap price-as low as 25p at the outset. The price was achieved by giving small educational discounts...Outside Africa; the books would sell at the normal trade paperback terms (Hill 123).

By the end of 1962, Van Milne left the Series and Alan Hill, who had become aware of the need for specialized help, asked Chinua Achebe to become the first editor for the series. Achebe was hired in 1962 and as Keith Sambrook explains:

For the next ten years Chinua edited the series, we published 100 titles in ten years, an average of ten per year. He read them all, commented on them, said whether he thought they were worth publishing or not, and in addition to the hundred there were many more that we didn't accept. In many cases he did major editorial work, recommending to authors important improvements to their work (Peterson, 153).

The sales were phenomenal and "Achebe's own books selling by the million provided the economic basis for the rest of the series" (Peterson, 153). Alan Hill also concedes that by 1984 when they had published 300 titles one third of the sales revenue from the entire list came from Achebe's four novels. And so Achebe's freely offered literary judgment plus his own tremendous sales were the backbone of the African Writers Series (Peterson 153-154). Three things accounted for this success. First the launching of the series coincided with the independence of African countries and growing nationalism on the continent. This growing nationalism led to an Africanization of the educational system. Thus, there was a need for literature written by Africans in African schools. Secondly, Heinemann was an educational publisher and with its growing market in Africa, mailings to schools, contact with inspectors and universities, Heinemann was able to get these books into the network in Africa. Thirdly, there was a growing interest in the west in this literature for

a variety of reasons. The renewed impetus in the African American civil rights and feminist movements in the USA had opened up the opportunity for minority discourse, thus literature by women, African Americans, native Indians and Hispanics was becoming visible and slowly gaining entrance into academia.

In celebrating forty years of the African Writers Series, Ngugi Wa Thiongo explains that:

The growth and consolidation of the modern tradition of African literature in English are almost inseparable from the genesis and growth of Heinemann's African Writers' Series. African writing is the nearest thing we have to a pan-African common heritage and this, in no small measure is due to the African Writers Series" (Heinemann 40th anniversary Celebration pamphlet, 2002)

Its importance underscored here by Ngugi has been quite visible. It is the only series, which has three times produced African winners of the Nobel Prize for literature. These laureates are Naguib Mahfouz from Egypt, Nadine Gordimer from South Africa and Wole Soyinka from Nigeria. The series also has to its credit other prestigious literary prizes including the Commonwealth Writer's Prize, The Noma Award for African Writing, the Caine Prize for African Writing and the Guardian Fiction Prize (40th anniversary pamphlet). It is important to note that prestigious literary prizes are the stuff on which the canon feeds. Prestigious literary prizes instantly canonize a writer and a canonized writer consolidates his/her position with a literary prize. The power of Heinemann and multinational

publishers is seen again when one looks at the Winners of the 100 best books from Africa in the 21st Century. Encouraged by Prof. Ali Mazrui, the Zimbabwe International Book Fair launched the contest to select Africa's 100 best books of the 21st Century. The winners were announced on the 19th of February 2002 by the president of the fifteen-man jury, Prof. Njabulo Ndebele. In the creative works category over 90% of the books selected are published by multinationals and Heinemann tops the list with 11 entries. As Loretta Stec contends, "the names winning these prizes and awards may be leading names in African literature to an international audience largely because these were the writers chosen to be published and reviewed and acclaimed by companies with the capital and the prestige to do so. In the context of Africa, Heinemann produced a pantheon of literary greats for an international audience" (142).

Archiving and the Future of Anglophone African Literature

Written literature depends on effective record keeping as a basis for new writing. Literary texts and biographical information on writers need to be preserved, not only to keep the texts for posterity but to help in reconstructing accurate editions of texts and literary biographies.

However, the present dissemination trend of African literature presents a situation where the few Anglophone literary manuscripts that have been archived are housed in the UK and North America. This archiving of African literature so far is not being done with a systematic

interest to keep this literature for posterity. The majority of the archiving being done is largely a by-product of publishing abroad. In the days when most African writers resided in Africa, once a literary text was published outside Africa, it became easier to sell the manuscript to a library where the book was published instead of mailing it back to the writer. Also after talking with some writers, one gets the impression that some African writers do not consider a manuscript as a valuable product. To them, only the published text or poem makes the writer. Such writers do not appreciate or comprehend the pivotal role of primary documents to future literary scholars.

As a result, Anglophone African literary manuscripts are scattered all over the UK and the USA. Some of the identified locations include: The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). SOAS has 58 manuscripts from the African Writer's Series (Library catalog on the Web). Some examples include galley proofs of Okigbo's *Labyrinths* (MS English 326710), a typescript of Amos Tutuola's *Ajaiyi and His Inherited Poverty* (MS English 288001). Even more revealing, it holds the typescript of an unpublished translation of the late D.O. Fanguwa's *Aditu Olodumare* (MS English 326709) and some of Ngugi's short stories and novels including complete texts of *Weep Not Child* and *A Grain of Wheat*. Furthermore, the African writers Series files that contain editorial exchanges with writers are housed in the University of Reading library. In the United States, Harvard University holds some of Achebe's manuscript novels, essays and

correspondence (See Barbara A. Burg et al) including sections of *Arrow of God*. After the failure of the University of Ife to keep its promise in archiving *The Palmwine Drinkard* for several years (Lindfors "The Future" 166), it is now housed in the Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas, which also has some manuscripts including that of Schreiner, Bosman, Paton, Gordimer and the early writings of Doris Lessing (Lindfors email). In addition, Northwestern University holds some manuscripts by Denis Brutus and Arthur Nortje, while Indiana has an abundance of papers by Gordimer and Fugard. (Lindfors email). This researcher tried to locate the manuscript of *Things Fall Apart* unsuccessfully. However, Prof. Lindfors shed some light on the whereabouts of this important manuscript. In an email to this writer, Prof. Lindfors explained that Achebe loaned the handwritten manuscript to Thomas Melone, a Cameroonian scholar. On assignment from Achebe, Lindfors tried to contact Melone in Cameroon in 1996 only to find out that Thomas Melone had died a few years earlier. All attempts to contact his next of kin, Stanislaus Melone, failed. This researcher has just found out that Stanislaus Melone has also died and the search for the manuscript continues.

The implications of this archival trend is that, if African countries do not make a conscious effort to archive their literary treasures, in a hundred years from now most of the literary masterpieces will be lost and African literary texts or literary biographies will be constructed from

the fragmented remnants found in the Libraries of the UK and USA. Therefore, most of the works in this present generation will come to naught and the canon of twentieth century-African literary works will again be incomplete and not be representative of Africa's literary output. Using Nigeria as an example, Lindfors explains the situation graphically:

Fifty years from now, when scholars are attempting to edit the complete works of Wole Soyinka, they will find it extremely difficult to establish accurate texts for *The Interpreters* and *Season of Anomy* (to mention only two works flawed with numerous misprints) if none of the author's manuscripts and none of the publisher's proofs are available for study. Others who may be interested in larger matters such as the process of creation, the tactics of translation, or the impact of technological change (e.g. literacy) on traditions of verbal art will be sorely disappointed if the papers of such writers as Okigbo, Okara and Fagunwa have not been saved. And anyone attempting to write a literary bibliography of an author will be severely handicapped if no one has bothered to collect the author's letters ("Towards", 152).

Unfortunately, literary archiving is not given a privileged position in national libraries and archives. National archives concern themselves basically with preserving documents relating to the political history of the nation.

What You See Is What You Get: Teaching The Canon of African Literature.

In conducting research for this study, this writer sent out questionnaires attempting to find out which African writers are being taught in the USA to see whether curricula have responded to some of the recently published works of African literature, especially those published

on the continent. In the process 98 syllabi of different courses of African literature covering 2000-2002 have been collected. The syllabi show that Achebe, Ngugi, Soyinka and Armah dominate the teaching lists. Most of those who responded to the survey noted, however, that they would have liked to teach lesser-known works but due to the unavailability of these works in the United States, they have no choice but to teach works that are available. One of the respondents lamented: "it's terrible the way the "canon" has formed around the period from 1958-1975. Except for very few writers, like Buchi Emecheta, all recent writing is unavailable. It is a shame that Soyinka's plays of the 1980's and 1990's are all out of print (King *Baabu* was not even distributed in the US [...]) I particularly wish *The Last Harmattan* were still in print." If texts by Soyinka can face dissemination problems then it goes without saying that most works published by new writers with indigenous publishers in Africa have not left their publishing locale.

However, interestingly enough, one third of the syllabi received have to do with gender. The Courses include titles like "Black women writers: cross-cultural connections" "African women writers", "gender and nationalism", "Race, gender and Postcolonial discourse" etc. Amongst the African women writers frequently studied are: Buchi Emecheta, Tsitsi Dagarembga, Assia Djebar, Ama Ata Aidoo, Mariama Ba, and Sindiwe Magona. Thus, African literature is thriving in the US and the African literature canon seemed to have opened up to allow for women writers. As

Paul Lauter posits "Changing the canon has [...] become a major objective of literary practitioners of women studies, black studies, and other "ethnic" studies-the academic wings of the social movements of the 1960's and 1970's" (23). This statement can be validated when one looks at previous surveys.

In 1976 Zinta Konrad carried out a survey to attempt "to learn which works were frequently taught, which works were not being taught and the reasons why these works were not taught" (260). From this survey Konrad came up with a list of fifteen frequently cited works. Of course, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* topped the chart and other members of the elite texts included, Chinua Achebe's *Dark Child*, Ferdinand Oyono's *Houseboy*, *The Palmwine Drinkard*, Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Ngugi Wa Thiongo's *Weep Not Child*, and *Modern Poetry from Africa* by Moore and Beire (266). The list did not include a text written by an African woman. It is interesting to note that Heinemann originally published over ten of the titles cited. Judging from her survey, Konrad concludes,

These texts constitute the classics of African literature as taught in the United States. It is apparent that African literature is very much in its initial stages of growth in university curricula. The works listed are repeatedly taught to beginning students with little or no previous exposure to African literature. The heavy concentration of relatively few works would also indicate that few courses are taught beyond a general introductory level (266-267).

The only name which is conspicuously absent from Konrad's first fifteen is Soyinka, but one can conjecture that this is because Soyinka is primarily a dramatist and the novel is the genre most widely disseminated. Or maybe

because of the apparent obscurity of his language Soyinka's novel *The Interpreters* could not make it in an introductory course. Keith Booker makes this point when he explains the scope of his book *The African Novel in English*:

The emphasis on accessibility has led me to exclude important English Language novels such as Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters* or Bessie Head's *A Question of Power*, largely because I find that these texts are extremely difficult for western readers, especially those who are just beginning to study the African Novel. (ix)

Bernth Lindfors also conducted a similar research, which shows that there is a direct relationship between the way African Literature is disseminated and the books that are considered "the canon" in Anglophone African Literature. Lindfors compiled *Black African Literature in English*, published in three volumes. The first volume, covering the years 1936-1976, contained 3305 entries, the second, 1977-1981, contained 2831 entries, and the third, covering 1982-1986 contained 5689 entries. Then he published another supplement covering 1987-1991. Combining this data from 1936-1991, he came up with what he calls "Famous Authors' reputation test", which is "a simple citation index that recorded the frequency with which an author and his works were discussed in detail in print by literary scholars and critics" ("Big Shots", 62). The results identified forty authors ranging from Soyinka in the first position with 2961 to Okpewho, in the fortieth position with a score of 167. In 1986 Lindfors also undertook a tour of forty universities in Anglophone Africa, including Cameroon but excluding South Africa. In these

universities he noted which Anglophone African authors students were now required to read and the frequency with which authors were taught in literature and drama courses. Lindfors reviewed “194 courses taught at 30 universities in 13 African nations...representing as much as 60 per cent of the total number of African literature courses taught in Anglophone Africa in the mid-eighties” (“Teaching” 47). Although the data from both studies reveal that, “there are disparities between the preferences of the critics and the preferences of the teachers” (“Big Shots” 70), many of the authors in both lists are the same. In fact the same three writers, Soyinka, Achebe, and Ngugi, dominate both lists. Lindfors explains the list of preferred texts as follows:

First of all the titles on the list have been published by multinational publishers. True, in some countries there may be local editions...but the only editions of these works that are available throughout Africa are those issued by a multinational firm. Second, the publisher most frequently represented on the list is Heinemann, which can claim nine of the top ten texts, sixteen in the top twenty, and thirty of the full list of forty-one titles (Dessert, 130).

One may argue that this is the usual pattern in canon formation, since institutions are always reluctant to change a successful curriculum. The argument hinges on the assumption that new “good” books with value will eventually replace less valuable works written in an earlier period. Loretta Stec, judging from Lindfors’ research, concludes that “Heinemann has had a very strong effect on what Anglophone African literary works are considered valuable enough to read, discuss, analyze in print, and teach: hence their value transmutes them into a canonical list” (144). Obviously,

this kind of “king maker” status in the hands of a foreign publisher also determines the kinds of writing that are validated.

Judging from the twenty-six names in the combined rankings column, Lindfors believes there is evidence for what he terms “brilliant conclusions on canon formation” to help “young writers who may aspire to canonical status” (Big Shots, 73). The conclusions are listed numerically from 1-4. The first conclusion is that to be a successful writer “it helps to be a West African, preferably Nigerian,” being Ghanaian is equally advantageous. He also adds that being East African is not an “insurmountable” handicap judging from the presence of Ngugi and Okot on the prestigious list. However, “the odds seemed to be stacked against Central Africans, not one of whom has yet attained any visibility in the Anglophone literary canon.” The second conclusion is that “it helps to publish your works with a multinational firm rather than with a local publisher who has no means of international distribution”. Thirdly, it helps to write something that is acceptable for use in educational institutions in order to become part of the canon. Lindfors adds here that “if your book gets adopted as a required text on the nationwide secondary school leaving exam, your fame and possibly fortune will be assured”. It is interesting to note that only Lindfors’ fourth and final conclusion “it helps to write well” has to do with the craft of writing. These aspects of canon formation raised here by Lindfors stretch back to Achebe’s pioneering role in African literature. The fact that Achebe is Nigerian and was a founding

editor for Heinemann is not unconnected to the presence of many Nigerians on the Heinemann African Writer's Series. In fact Ruth Hamilton-Jones, one of the editors on the African Writers Series in a paper titled, "The African Writers Series" confirms this view when she writes:

Chinua Achebe was based in West Africa, so naturally the list he began to build was largely West African. As time went on, this affected the way people perceived African Literature because the African literature being published was West African so it looked as though that was where the literary talent was located.

It is worth noting that this is still the international perception. Also, the view that a literary text aiming at canonicity must be published by a multinational finds its roots in the publication of the first literary texts published by Heinemann, which received their canonical value by being disseminated and critiqued first in the West before Africa heard of them. While the multinational publishers exposed the African writers to an international audience, they inadvertently stifled creativity and limited the creative arena. Kole Omotoso reproved this tendency when he charged that:

One side effect of a foreign audience is that this audience can take only a few "phenomenal" African writers at one time. There can only be one Achebe at a time and his way of writing also becomes the way African literature must be written. If another writer attempts to do something else, he upsets the foreign audience and there is an end. If our audience was home based, then we could have any number and variety of writers because, except there be deliberate attempt to court trouble, the sky is wide enough for two birds to fly in peace! (Omotoso, 256)

In addition, since Heinemann Educational Books was primarily involved in the sale of school textbooks, when it became involved in the production of African fiction, they were marketed primarily as school textbooks. This has affected African readers. As Kole Omotoso explains:

African readers, in dealing with African literature, approach it as something to be studied, crammed, perused, and waded through. It is not to be come to as a natural process of browsing around to find interesting reading material. Instead the student peruses the works of Soyinka and Achebe but relaxes with Harold Robbins, Dennis Wheatly and Marie Corelli (257).

Nonetheless, the editors at Heinemann are aware of their ability to reach educational markets in Africa and the impact this has on canonicity. That explains why in reference to Ben Okri's refusal to publish his novel, *The Famished Road* with Heinemann, Becky Clarke, one of the editors on the African Writer's Series in a paper titled "The History, Development And Effect Of The African Writers Series On African Culture And Publishing", argues that "Despite his [Okri's] enormous success within the international community, he is hardly known in his own country. The irony is that had Ben Okri published with AWS, he would certainly be on his way to becoming a household name because of Heinemann's reputation in educational publishing and excellent network of contacts in Africa" This statement underscores the power of multinational publishers like Heinemann in canonizing African literary texts even in Africa.

The Turning Tide

However, this success by Heinemann and other multinationals in bringing African literature to a wide audience has not been available to the younger generation of African writers. As Niyi Osundare explains:

One thing is sure, the period in which Achebe and Soyinka launched themselves on to the literary scene was saner and kinder than the one in which their successors are presently trapped. Whereas their works received enthusiastic attention from publishers and were distributed all over the world, overseas publishers now see African literature as a bad risk [...] (qtd. in Gibbs and Mapanje, 188).

Overseas publishers like Heinemann who had launched the careers of the first generation of African writers underwent their own changes in the 80's. For example, Heinemann was later taken over by British Tyre and Rubber and then by other corporate bodies that found profits more interesting than developing African literature. The new managing director "decided that only one or two titles should be added to the series each year instead of about ten. Large numbers of books were put out of print" (Ruth Hamilton, AWS Web page). The series was even suspended for a while. Although the African Writers Series resumed publishing, its importance as an outlet for African literature was severely curtailed. In 1965, Achebe could boast that *Things Fall Apart* had sold 20,000 copies in Nigeria alone. The market trend now shows another picture. As Hamilton again reveals in her paper "African Writers Series", "Today, the bulk of our sales are to the US, and the books are largely bought by students doing African Studies courses, which include literature, politics, and social studies". In fact, Jean Hay, the

editor of Heinemann's African Writer's Series in the United States, talking in 1996 to Loretta Stec, revealed that Heinemann publishes about eight titles a year and most of these are novels. She declared that: "we aren't even trying to publish poetry; it doesn't sell. The one exception is an anthology of African women's poetry that has done quite well" (Stec, 143). This shows another centripetal force which publishers exert on what kind of literature is made available and of course what titles are presented to the African audience as their own literature.

Another example of editorial power can be seen in the handling of Amma Darko's manuscript *A Cross of a Kind*. As Zak reports, the manuscript readers acknowledged that the work had potential as a school examination text since it raised social issues like educational discrimination against girls, rape, widowhood and witchcraft. Yet Heinemann rejected the manuscript because it needed "structural changes and development of characters in order to give the narrative more depth...make it a tighter read and a book that will travel" (98). Of course, a book that will "travel" is one that will, for the most part satisfy readers in metropolitan centers in Europe and North America where Heinemann sells best. Thus, the African Writers Series, implicitly, creates a literary tradition that suits the West and this generates creative problems for the African Writer.

Another poignant aspect as explained by the Heinemann editor, Hay, is the fact that branch offices no longer exist in Africa therefore the

process of soliciting manuscripts is “indirect”. “Indirect” means that this editor’s duty is to locate African writers living in the United States from whom she requests manuscripts for the African Writers Series rather than seeking writers resident in Africa (Stec 144). This, of course, has huge implications for the type of writers that get published.

It is in this regard that Achebe saw the role of the multinational publisher as a temporal necessity. He predicted that:

If we are going to have a genuine literary tradition, then the entire book business should have an indigenous base. Not just writers being here but their publishers, editor, bookshops, printers. And I have no apologies for this. We say “thank you very much” to those who saw us through the initial painful steps, but I think if we going to grow at all, we won’t grow shuttling between Lagos and London and Paris and New York. I think London, Paris and New York will in future, come here and take what catches their fancy from what we produce. Like anybody else, they’ll compete for what we have and reissue abroad works, which originate with local publishers (qtd. in Gibbs 98).

But Achebe’s dream came crashing in the heels of falling economies in Africa. Indigenous publishing in countries like Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria hitherto thriving began facing insurmountable difficulties. Zell Hans, writing in 1993, stated that:

The indigenous book and publishing industries in most African countries are currently in a state of crisis after a decade of relative boom and rapid expansion. Much of Africa has become a bookless society. Because of foreign exchange constraints, most libraries in Africa have been unable to purchase any new books for the past few years, much less maintain their journal subscriptions. Research and teaching meanwhile have been crippled. The constantly deepening economic recession and chronic balance of payments problems in most African countries have taken their toll on publishing and book development in general and the output of African writing in particular (309).

This implies that submitting a manuscript for publishing is a process laced with difficulties for most African writers. Thus, potential masterpieces are stillborn and those that get the chance of indigenous delivery die a premature death due to lack of dissemination channels. The only books that can be disseminated on a wide scale are books published by multinational publishers. But then these publishers are no longer interested given the present economic difficulties related to publishing new works from Africa, so what gets continuously disseminated are the works published in the 60s and 70s.

Consequently, there is a dire need for the few titles that are published by local publishers to be made visible by viable dissemination channels. If a text is published, for example, in Yaoundé, Lagos or Accra and circulates only in these cities, how will teachers in other African areas or elsewhere know of its existence? Due to problems of distribution, indigenous publishers only publish locally. Hence a locally published bestseller in Cameroon is usually not known even in neighboring Nigeria. For example D.O. Fanguwa's novel *The Forest of a Thousand Demons*, which has always featured on the Nigerian School certificate exam (Wilkinson 100), is hardly known in Cameroon. If teachers are not aware of these books, how can a school, bookshop or library order these books? Even where they are known, the trouble and financial constraint of obtaining them, coupled with the shortcomings of the library system, lead

to a situation where most audiences in African countries cannot keep up with their own literature except through school examination texts. Thus, the works of new African writers that make it through the strenuous process of publishing are not known outside their home base. If the works are unknown then critics cannot review them. Furthermore, they do not acquire value and do not become visible. Since the multinational publishers have shown "less interest in African Literature since the first flush of curiosity coming out of the newly independent countries" (Soyinka, 92) and new texts are not coming through their pipeline, African institutions are forced to prescribe the old classics year in year out.

As Hans Zell posits:

Few indigenous publishers have been able to meet the challenges of the book shortages caused by economic crises. Moreover, the majority of them are still at a disadvantage over the multinationals and are unable to compete with them on real terms. A viable indigenous publishing that can produce books on a scale that matches local needs is, sadly still largely a dream in most parts of the continent" (370).

Osundare confirms this same view when he underscores the fact that:

African Literature is thus in a painfully illiterate bind: books published by Africans abroad are not available even in their home countries due to unfavorable currency exchange rates, while the few published in Africa are not available beyond their immediate locality. To make matters worse, those journals and magazines which provided vibrant literary outlets in the 1960's and 1970's are either now extinct or going through protracted dormancy. The bookshops are empty. (qtd. in Gibbs and Mapanje, 188)

Thus the canon for African literature in English is artificially induced but could reflect a dynamic corpus of work richly varied as the African

continent itself if the politics of publishing and dissemination were different. In his recently published book, *The Ordeal of the African Writer*, Charles Larson deals effectively with the production and dissemination of African literature. The book discusses the publishing situation in a few African countries and presents testimonies from about a dozen writers and publishers. However, Larson is aware of the need for individual country studies when he admits, "Detailed information about publishing in specific African countries is difficult to obtain" (101). Larson concludes his study by stating that "The crisis in African writing lies not with the writers themselves but in the complicated and debilitating environment in which they work". Despite this debilitating environment, writing, publishing and reading of African literature still thrives in Africa. Nevertheless, during these forty years of extensive writing of African literature in English, most studies of African literature have only dealt with issues of form. Very few attempts have been made to look at the production and dissemination patterns of African literature on the continent itself. As Lindfors has observed "the pity is that so many African scholars have been drawn toward empty formalistic exercises when there is so much that they alone, are ideally situated to do to enrich African literary studies" ("The Future" 160).

Locating texts: Enriching the Canon

It is now forty years since Heinemann launched the African Writers Series and African literature in English has joined mainstream literature. In fact, *Things Fall Apart* has been included in the seventh edition of the *Anthology of English Literature* “as a major contribution of the 20th century” (Achebe “UNESCO” 48).

The series was therefore a pioneer in providing African writers with outlets for their works and for making their voices available to an international readership (Altbach 7). Unfortunately, this “international readership” has dominated the readership on the continent due to dissemination patterns in Europe and the United States. This in turn has helped to create a canon which does not reflect the regional variety of the continent.

Nonetheless, due to the reduced activities of multinational publishing houses like Longman, Heinemann, Macmillan and OUP in producing African literature and the exorbitant costs of importing books into their countries, resident Africans are obliged to read the few locally produced texts. Although these books may not enjoy international status, they and their writers are household names within the national boundaries. Therefore, to enrich African literary studies, it does not suffice to focus only on multinational publishers as the sole outlets for African Literature. There is a need for individual country and territory investigation to locate works that are being read, and to study existing dissemination trends.

Such a study will provide a basis to enhance visibility for new texts worldwide and preserve them for posterity. As Buma Kor confirms:

The way to know all about the literature of Africa is to know the different writings from different parts of Africa, the distinctive characteristics embodied in all writings from country to country or region to region. It is not grouping them together, but singling them out, analyzing the different themes problems, styles, messages (64)

It is in this light that this study of the production and dissemination of Anglophone Cameroon literature becomes urgent.

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CHAPTER TWO

REVERSING BABEL: ENGLISH IN ANGLOPHONE CAMEROON

Anglophone Cameroon literature is mostly written in English although there are over ninety ethnic languages in the region. Just like the written literature, the identity of individuals in this region has crystallized around English because of their minority status within a dominant Francophone Cameroon.

On the map of Africa, Cameroon is a triangular country situated on the west coast. It is bordered by Chad in the north, Nigeria in the west, Central African Republic to the east and Gabon and Congo to the south. On the continent, it is the only country with exo-glossic bilingualism: French and English are the official languages although there are over two hundred and fifty indigenous languages in the entire nation. As a result, Cameroon is made up of two distinct linguistic regions, the French region, which covers four-fifths of the territory and the English-speaking region which covers the rest. The country is divided into ten administrative provinces (Center, North, Far North, East, South, Littoral, West, Adamawa, North West, and South West). According to a 1999 United Nations publication, there are 14.7million (1998 estimate) people in Cameroon. English-speaking Cameroonians make up 20% of this number and geographically occupy the North West and South West provinces. The English-speaking region has had different names. It was referred to

as Southern Cameroons during the British Mandate and Trusteeship period, 1919-1961; West Cameroon during the Federal period, 1961-1972, and now, in the present “Republic of Cameroon,” it is often referred to as “Anglophone Cameroon.” These changing appellations in a way reflect the changing status of English in the region. Although there is a paucity of scholarship on Anglophone Cameroon, a number of scholars (Loreto Todd 1982; Chumbow 1980; Simo Bobda 1994; Han-Georg Wolf, 1997, 2000; Krieger 1991, Koenig et al, 1983) have examined English in Cameroon. Their analysis has dwelt for the most part on the varieties of English spoken in Cameroon, Language use, the effect of bilingualism and the sociological influences on English phonology in the country. This Chapter, however, sets out to show the historical and social place of English in Cameroon and how it has come to be a marker of identity for Anglophone Cameroon.

Based on this identity, there is a drive for Anglophones to produce and disseminate literature in English. Such a move obviously goes against the grain of the continuing debate amongst African writers, that in order for African literature to thrive, it needs to be produced in indigenous languages. Ngugi Wa Thiongo, the chief proponent for African languages, in his book *Decolonising the Mind* holds that African writers should write in African languages thereby giving something back to the African languages, instead of stealing from them to enhance the English language. Ngugi contends that African writers writing in European

languages are continuing the process of mental colonization wrought by imperialism, which is why Ngugi himself no longer writes his fiction or essays in English since 1986.

To support the claim of African Languages, participants meeting at a conference entitled "Against all Odds: African Languages and Literatures in the 21st century" held in Eritrea on January 7-11th 2000, drew up the Asmara declaration. The declaration amongst other things, holds that "African languages must take on the duty, responsibility and the challenges of speaking for the continent" (Asmara Declaration), and calls on the use of translation to open up a dialogue amongst African languages. The conference participants hope that the declaration will spur African writers to make the switch from European languages to African language in their writings. Yet in Anglophone Cameroon there is a need to uphold the English Language, and Anglophones talk of a dire need for the increase of literature in that language. In order to understand the quest for the production and visibility for Anglophone Cameroon literature, one needs to interrogate the genesis of English in Cameroon and what it has come to represent in present times.

English Language in Cameroon 1800-1919:

British traders introduced English to Cameroon about 1800 and the language was quickly pidginized by the natives, along the coast (Delancey 8). Between 1850 -1884 the British were in control of the coastal regions of Cameroon and the coastal chiefs actually requested the British

government to annex the country formally (Todd 6). However, the formal teaching of English through the establishment of a school is credited to Joseph Merrick, a Jamaican Baptist missionary, who opened a pioneer mission station in Bimbia in 1844. Shortly after this, Alfred Saker established another station in Victoria. These missionary stations started converting Cameroonians to Christianity and began colonial education in English. Indeed, by 1884 the Baptists had established 24 mission stations, each with a vernacular school, and they had, in addition, five English medium schools, which were highly regarded by Cameroonians and where the main aim was to teach standard British English (Todd 10). However, the most impressive educational work carried out by the missionaries at this stage was in the vernacular. Merrick wrote and printed several books in the Isubu language, while Alfred Saker translated *The New Testament* into Duala and Fuller translated *The Pilgrim's Progress*, also into Duala. Isubu and Duala were languages spoken by the indigenes where the mission stations were located.

Although the Germans took over Cameroon in 1884 after the Berlin Conference, English did not disappear. Cameroonians and Germans especially on the huge, German-built plantations, which drew their labor force from different ethnic groups, frequently used English. However, as Germany established its supremacy over Cameroon, the English Baptists left in 1886; to their credit, they handed over eleven schools, with a total enrollment of three hundred and sixty-eight pupils, to a German-speaking

missionary society based in Switzerland (qtd. in Gwei 25). By 1910, the German government, which had hitherto left education in the hands of the Christian missions, became strict on educational policies. They actually “made school attendance compulsory, made German the medium of instruction and made being a school ‘drop out’ a punishable offense” (Chaibi 139). Nevertheless English remained the language of court records in Victoria, as well of records of the Baptist church in both Douala and Victoria. Though German trade became paramount, British firms continued to operate using English and pidgin (Vernon-Jackson, 12).

The growth of English in Cameroon received a boost again after World War I when, as a result of the Treaty of Versailles, in 1919, Cameroon became a mandated territory of France and Britain. France acquired four-fifths of the general territory and ruled it as an autonomous French colony, while one-fifth went to Britain and was governed as an integral part of Nigeria, which was then a British colony. British Cameroon was divided into the Northern and Southern Cameroons. Northern Cameroon was divided administratively among the three Northern Nigerian provinces Adamawa, Benue, and Bornu and Southern Cameroons was governed as a single province of Nigeria. In this situation, Southern Cameroons became an appendage of Nigeria.

While the French developed a closely controlled educational system in their part of the country and French became the official language, the British zone was virtually abandoned so far as government

action towards education. Even political officers of the British Army who had been assigned local responsibility had been withdrawn as part of British withdrawal of military personnel after the war (Vernon-Jackson 16). Thus, after the war, it was the missionaries who again championed the course of education in a bid to spread Christianity. The Catholics led by the Mill Hill fathers opened a senior primary school in Sasse in 1923. Although the Presbyterians and Baptists also opened schools, the Catholic mission was quite aggressive in its education policy and they opened schools in very remote areas. When the British returned, they continued the policy established by the missionary schools but sought to bring only a minimum of literacy to Africans for the purpose of spreading religion and education. In this regard, the British favored schools with indigenous languages as the medium of instruction. According to Todd:

In Cameroon as in Nigeria, their (British) recommended education policy was to encourage widespread primary education, using the language of the village, town or region as the medium of education in years 1-4, and English in years 5-8 (Todd 10).

Despite the use of indigenous languages in the first four years of elementary school, some form of English was still taught in these classes. Todd identifies three possible reasons why: To begin with, English enjoyed a position of prestige even from the local teacher. Furthermore, most parents could not afford to sponsor their children up to year eight and wanted them to gain some English language skills that could guarantee some form of employment by year four. And finally, in a heavily multilingual country like Cameroon, it was often difficult to find the

teachers who could speak the language of a village or region (Todd 10).

Thus vernacular education faced a decline. As Todd reports:

In 1927, for example, there were 299 vernacular schools teaching 7,155 children, but by 1959 the number of vernacular schools had fallen to 6, and the number of children being educated in this way to 191. Or, to put the statistic another way, by 1959 99% of all children receiving primary education were being taught through the medium of English (10).

However, the death knell for vernacular education came from the newly established Southern Cameroons government. A ministerial decree signed in Buea, on September 27, 1958, stated that “English is to be the medium of instruction in primary schools and all the textbooks used are to be in English” (qtd. in Todd 11). With the focus of education now placed on instruction in English, the training of teachers became a government priority and the government school, which had been founded in 1927, was elevated to an Elementary Teacher Training college (ETTC) and relocated to Kake. The Catholic and Basel Missions followed suit by opening teacher-training colleges in Nyassoso and Njinikom respectively. In order to fill the visible gap in female education, the Catholics opened a teacher training college for women, the St Francis teacher training college at Fiango in Kumba. Nevertheless in the 1920s the content of education left much to be desired since the idea of the missionaries as well as the colonial government was to “provide basic education which produced assistants without posing threats to educators” (Chiabi 138).

This situation was acute in Southern Cameroon, where during the first seventeen years of British rule there were no secondary schools;

therefore, many English-speaking Cameroonian students who wanted to pursue secondary education traveled to Nigeria where they faced an enrollment limit, although the medium of instruction was English. This situation changed when the British reluctantly approved the establishment of a Catholic secondary school, in 1939, at Sasse. Sasse remained the only secondary school in Cameroon until the Basel mission opened another boys secondary school almost ten years later, at Bali, in 1948. Then, the Catholics, filling an obvious gap in female education, opened a secondary school for girls in 1955. In these schools English was the medium of instruction, since the value became such that the local population questioned the implementation of vernacular in schools. The curriculum in these schools included general education as well as subjects with practical value, such as shorthand and bookkeeping, needed by government departments. Students had to write the British Junior Cambridge Exam and then the Senior Cambridge exam. With the introduction of the Cambridge certificates the status of English-Language became undisputed because of the economic benefits that resulted from a mastery of English language. Furthermore, secondary education also prepared the students for post-secondary schools in Nigeria, namely, the Yaba Higher College, opened in 1934, and the University of Ibadan opened in 1943.

Hans-Georg Wolf contends that the educational efforts of the missions need not blind one to the fact that the British neglect of education

in West Cameroon had an overall negative effect which provoked criticism from the United Nations on a number of occasions ("English" 93). The following figures show the state of education in English by 1954.

Table I: Education in West Cameroon in 1954

	Number of Institutions	Number of Pupils
Primary	319	37,307
Teacher Training Centers	4	290
Secondary Schools	2	426
Technical schools	1	138

(Chiabi. p. 149)

The poor state of education was also blamed on the lack of alternative educational resources. Mbassi-Manga emphasizes this point when he notes that:

The ancillary education services too were inadequate and even nonexistent in many places. Newspapers were printed in English but they were not children's papers... There were no cinemas in the country until 1949 and then only in Victoria... the radio was introduced latterly, but it was for many a "music box" and not an educational tool (55).

Wolf concludes that "as a consequence of the disastrous educational policy in Southern Cameroons, the extent of illiteracy was between 80 and 90%" (96), and this situation encouraged the spread of Pidgin English instead of Standard British English.

In comparison, Vernon-Jackson points out that, educational resources in French Cameroon were supported by both government and missionary structures, which included further training in France. The effort

in schools was augmented by the presence of a relatively high number of French émigré, printing presses for local French publications, and there was low tolerance for vernacular in schools, which encouraged the effective learning of French (17). This was in line with the French policy of assimilation, which intended to turn the colonial subjects into French men and women. One can still see a significant impact of this limited access to Standard English in Anglophone towns where the rate of literacy in Standard English is lower than the rate of literacy in French in Francophone towns. The following tables exemplify this point:

Table 2a: Distribution of French Speakers in Francophone towns.

Town	%Male French Speakers	%Female French Speakers
Douala	96%	94%
Edea	94%	95%
Nkongsamba	95%	96%
Bafoussam	94	92
Foumban	90	91
Bafang	97	92
Dschang	91	92
Yaoundé	92	93
Bafia	91	93
Ebolowa	99	95
Sangmelima	98	95
Mbanjock	98	93
Kribi	98	97
Garoua	71	64
Kaele	84	87
Bertoua	88	80

(Source: Koenig, Chia and Povey. 107-109)

Table 2b: Distribution of English speakers in Anglophone towns

Town	% Male SE Speakers	%Female SE Speakers
Kumba	65	53
Victoria	71	74
Buea	70	74
Mamfe	66	75
Bamenda	85	83
Kumbo	69	63

These tables indicate that for most Francophones French is their common language while for most Anglophones, Standard English is not. This is understandable, since Anglophones use pidgin widely as a lingua franca. This pattern of language use can thus be traced back to the beginnings of Western education practices in both territories.

IN THE MIX: ENGLISH IN A FEDERATED AND UNITED CAMEROON

Nigeria and French Cameroon gained independence in 1960. Southern Cameroons, which had gained self-government in 1954, remained wedged in between them awaiting its fate. The United Nations decided to organize a plebiscite in Southern Cameroons. The question asked was whether Southern Cameroons wanted to join Nigeria or The Republic of Cameroon. Southern Cameroons was not given the third

option: becoming independent on their own. The plebiscite took place on 11th February 1961, and Southern Cameroons voted to join French Cameroon in a federation. The two regions formed the Federal Republic of Cameroon. Southern Cameroons adopted the name West Cameroon while French Cameroon became known as East Cameroon. The reasons for this choice can be found in the way the British administered Southern Cameroons as a sort of province within Nigeria. Hence, afraid of total domination by Nigerians, Southern Cameroons, in a move which is now heavily regretted, disregarded linguistic ties and chose the angel they did not know over the devil they knew too well (See V. Amaazie).

Although the federation resulted in heavy centralization of the government administration, West Cameroon retained English as the official language and East Cameroon retained French. Immediately, structures were put in place to harmonize the two educational systems, with the aim of achieving bilingualism in English and French. As part of this process, secondary education was federalized in 1962 thereby making English and French subjects in the East and West Cameroon secondary schools respectively.

As a former Minister of National Education put it "Cameroon must become the crucible where, fed by the fire of our faith, the eminent physical, intellectual and moral values of our races, nourished on the Anglo-Saxon and French cultures, will dissolve and merge" (qtd. in Vernon Jackson, 23). The government was thus bent on making Cameroon a

bilingual state by merging the two colonial cultures. Bernard Fonlon, an Anglophone intellectual and one of the key players during the early years of independence, made a case for early bilingualism, urging the compulsory teaching of both French and English to begin in primary schools ("A Case"). In order to harmonize the two systems of education, a purely bilingual secondary school was opened in Man 'O' War Bay, in 1963, as an experiment. In 1965 another one was opened in Yaoundé attached to the UNESCO sponsored Ecole Normal Supérieure. The bilingual school in Man 'O' War Bay, located in West Cameroon, was to serve as a model. The manner in which the school operated is worth noting:

Each year, an equal number of choice students, from each Federal State are admitted into the school. In the first second and third forms, they are taught in separate classes; the *Francophones* receive intensive courses in English, the *Anglophones* in French, and do the rest of the subjects in their respective first language. At the beginning of the fourth form[...]the pioneering group was re-arranged into two, graded, bilingual classes in which *Francophones* and *Anglophones* sit side by side and receive the same lessons; and in addition to the continued effort, some subjects are taught in French, others in English...To test this experiment, it is intended that this pioneering group should take the *Brevet* (a French secondary school examination taken at the fourth form) and the GCE Ordinary level, at the end of the fifth form. Thereafter, the students can prepare for the baccalauréat, or the G.C.E. Advanced Level, or both, as they choose.

(qtd. in Fonlon 1969, 38)

This would have been a perfect way to harmonize the two systems and create effective bilinguals in French and English. Unfortunately this model of bilingual education was not available to most students. Hence the fact

remained: English was used in West Cameroon schools and French in East Cameroon schools.

In West Cameroon, the missions continued their English education agenda as they tried to out do each other in opening more secondary schools. In 1962 the Baptists opened a girls secondary school in Victoria, which was later named after Alfred Saker. The following year the Basel mission opened the Basel Mission College, a secondary school for boys, which admitted girls in 1964, making it the first co-educational school in Cameroon. It was later re-named The Presbyterian Secondary School. Although the government slowly opened some schools, the Christian missions continued the lead in providing education, as the following figures show:

Table 3: Percent of mission schools in West Cameroon in 1970.

Type of Schools	Mission	Gov't	Other	% mission
Primary schools	691	1	69	90%
Secondary schools	16	3	0	84%
Primary teacher				
Training	11	1	0	92%
Commercial schools	0	0	5	--
Technical schools	0	1	3	--

(Source: Haupt. P. 8.)

The nationalism, which swept across Africa leading to the independence of most African nations did not touch the issue of language.

As Lizaribar Buxo points out,

This attests to the serious after effects of acculturation, so that colonial models were retained partly because of their symbolic status. In this manner, nationalism and colonial educational models

co-exist in absolute coherence for it is a question of symbols of power. In essence control is transferred from the colonial power to the new leaders and English (or any other European language) remains the undisputed medium of authority. (11)

It is, however, logical to posit that the reason English, or any European language for that matter, remained as an official language after colonization was because of a genuine problem created by colonialism. The so-called nations were nothing but entities made up of disparate ethnic groups that spoke different indigenous languages and "evidently the English language as a non indigenous common tongue at least among the educated elite- provided a basis for the continuation and possible consolidation of this fragile unity" (Goke Pariola 64).

In addition, the difficulty of choosing one indigenous language over another presented itself. In West Cameroon, Mungaka and Duala could have easily been adopted as national languages, since they had been a medium of instruction in most parts of southern Cameroon up till 1958, but this would have brought tension among other ethnic groups that had already showed a resentment studying Mungaka and Duala. Hence, the choice of English was nearly a forgone conclusion.¹ Despite the attainment of independence, the system of education in West Cameroon was still largely tied to Britain and remains relatively so even today. Primary school lasted seven years. At the end of the seven years, pupils took the government sponsored First School Leaving Exam to determine

¹ Koenig contends that using English and French as official languages has not abated any tensions in the case of Cameroon. She holds that, "contrary to the situation at independence and reunification, ethnic tensions have tended to increase" (114).

their success at that level. Those wishing to continue to secondary level education had to take the Government Common Entrance Examination to enter academic or technical secondary schools or other primary teaching establishments. Secondary education consisted of two cycles. The first cycle was a five-year course ending with the University of London General Certificate of Education (GCE) examinations at ordinary level, while students in technical schools sat for the City and Guilds of London Institute certificates. The few who were able to pursue the second cycle of secondary education entered the Cameroon College of Arts and Technology, which offered a two-year course leading to the GCE advanced level examinations. On obtaining the desired Advanced levels, students had two options: enrolling in the Federal University, founded in 1963, and located in Yaoundé, the national capital situated in East Cameroon, or entering into the Ecole Normale Supérieure Annex (Secondary Teacher Training College) located in West Cameroon.

Thus with the growth of primary and secondary education institutions the number of English speakers who could read and write grew but the situation left much to be desired. As Amin remarks "education is a worthwhile investment, but in West Cameroon, everything was lacking: teachers, books, teaching aids classrooms and other necessary facilities" (59). Therefore West Cameroon had problems finding trained personnel to teach English more so for bilingual education. The British did not only leave West Cameroon politically, they abandoned their educational

activities as well. This abandonment almost bordered on irresponsibility when one notes the case of the only technical School cited by Amin. This government trade center was mostly staffed by British expatriates, so when they left, the school was forced to close its doors. With education mostly in mission hands, enrollment was poor since most parents could not afford the required tuition (60).

After the British left, American Peace Corps volunteers came to salvage the situation in West Cameroon's education. They participated in opening new secondary and teacher training schools. In fact, the Peace Corps volunteers formed the largest number of graduate teachers in West Cameroon's secondary schools. They were also involved in teaching English in school and teaching civil servants in East Cameroon (Amin 113).

In terms of bilingualism, therefore, not much was achieved. Even the Federal University which was to be a flagship of bilingualism when it was founded in 1963, proved ineffective. The university was bilingual to the point that "the lecturer had a choice between English and French as a medium of instruction (whichever suits him best) whereas the student has no choice but to understand lectures, write (and 'present' oral) examinations in either language"(Chumbow, 292). With more French speaking lecturers teaching at the university, the university was and continues to be essentially French. This of course affected the graduation rate of English speaking students as compared to their Francophone

counterparts. Thus despite the rhetoric on bilingualism during the Federal period, it did not lead to a harmonization of the two systems.

On the 20th of May 1972, in what has now become a controversial referendum, the two Federated States, East and West Cameroon merged to become the United Republic of Cameroon. With the unitary state came a new dose of bilingualism. Constitutionally, the two official languages, English and French, could be used indiscriminately anywhere in Cameroon. In principle, this is still the case today. To bolster this bilingualism, English and French were supposed to be introduced in primary schools. According to Ze Amvela, the pioneer commission on the introduction of English in Francophone primary schools was held in 1973. It was decided that English would be taught in the last three classes of the Francophone primary school as a subject. A seminar held on bilingualism in Yaoundé in 1975, set the primary school course objectives:

To give the pupil the type of sound basic knowledge of practical English which he will need in everyday life after he leaves school (e.g. contacts with Anglophone Cameroonians, radio and television programmes in English, English Language News papers and books) [...] to provide a sound linguistic basis for further studies (Ze Amvela, 20).

In addition to this move in primary schools, the government linguistic centers created during the Federal period increased in number. These centers carried out English and French language classes particularly for civil servants although their doors were open to the general public too. These were, in effect, classes for adult language learners,

although recently these linguistic centers have started offering classes for young people during the long vacation.²

Still in line with its bilingual policy, the government continued to open many bilingual secondary schools across the country, although these schools have hardly followed the Man 'O' War Bay model. In effect these schools are not bilingual as such, but two separate schools –one following an English curriculum and the other French on the same campus. Furthermore, in higher education, the government created a program dubbed “bilingual training,” or “Formation Bilingue,” in the university and the several professional schools (Les grandes écoles) attached to it such as L' Ecole Normale Supérieure, L'Ecole Polytechnique, L'Ecole National d'Administration et de magistrature.

As part of the bilingual training program, English students in the university were expected to take a French course throughout their university program, and French- speaking students were also to have English on their academic menu. The only students exempted from this were the students studying towards a degree in French and English bilingual studies. Unfortunately, this bilingual training was largely ineffective. From this writer's experience as a student in the University of Yaoundé, the bilingual training classes lumped students together who had

² It suffices to note here that from teaching in the Yaounde linguistic Center in the early 1990s, I discovered that most adults and young people who come to learn English do not intend to use it to fit into the Cameroon bilingual mold. English is acquired as a means of taking advantage of opportunities abroad since English is a world language. On the contrary, the Anglophones who enroll in the center to learn French intend to use it in Cameroon to access the French-dominated higher education institutions and government administrative positions.

varying degrees of proficiency. Thus, the student who had lived mainly in Francophone towns and spoke French very well or had passed French at the GCE "A" Level sat in the same class with students who failed French in secondary school and had never lived in a Francophone town. The same held true for Francophones studying English. Thus, students who were proficient in the language taught in the bilingual class found it boring, and the less proficient easily lost interest; students just participated in the bilingual training program to fulfill a university requirement.

Theoretically then, every Cameroonian who graduates at least from secondary school, not to mention university, is expected to be able to read and write in French and English. Unfortunately this has not been the case, as can be seen from the most organized investigation of Cameroon Language use carried out between 1975-1978, published in 1983, as *A Sociolinguistic Profile of Urban Centers in Cameroon*, by Koenig, Chia, and Povey. A team of thirty researchers surveyed 4850 households in all but one of the largest cities and towns. This represented 28.5 % of the urban population, exactly where the effect of bilingualism from schools and the workforce is supposed to be felt. But the results revealed that there was little French and English bilingualism fifteen years after the implementation of the bilingual policy. Another survey, based on 12,712 school-age children, was carried out. Eighty-three percent of these children were living in Francophone Cameroon and 17% living in Anglophone Cameroon. The survey revealed that 87% of those in

Francophone Cameroon spoke French and 72% of those in Anglophone Cameroon spoke English. French speech in Anglophone areas or English speech in French Areas is so low as to be statistically insignificant (Koenig, 94-111). Though these statistics are twenty years old, recent studies on Cameroon (Wolf, 2001, Kreiger 1991) have all confirmed that total bilingualism of individuals in English and French remains a utopian ideal in Cameroon. Thus language use in Cameroon still follows strictly historical borderlines, where English is used predominantly in Anglophone Cameroon and French in Francophone areas although in general French language has a remarkable edge.

With the dominance of French, the status of English as an official language in Cameroon (which is supposed to be on the same footing with French) is constantly threatened by the minority status of its speakers. Bernard Fonlon had predicted this in his famous essay "Will we make or mar?" Fonlon emphatically argued that:

Unless the East Cameroon francophone leader in whose hands our cultural initiative lies, is prepared to share this authority with his brother from West of the Mungo (Anglophone), unless he is prepared to make the giant effort necessary to break loose from the strait jacket of his French education, unless he will show proof of his intellectual probity and admit candidly that there are things in the Anglo-Saxon way of life that can do his country good, there is little chance of survival, neither for English, nor even for African Values in the Federal Republic of Cameroon. With African Culture moribund, with John Bullism weak and in danger of being smothered, we will all be French in two generations or three! (qtd. in Arnold, 498)

This domination of French could be seen from the constitution. The 1972 constitution stipulated that English and French were to be the official

languages of Cameroon but in case of dispute, the French version was authentic (Kofele-Kale 1986, 67). Although such offensive pronouncements were eventually removed, the de facto position of English has not changed much. The two presidents of Cameroon, Amadou Ahidjo and Paul Biya, have been Francophones. It is common knowledge in Cameroon that during Ahidjo's 22 years of power, he never spoke in English apart from the ceremonial "I do so swear" each time his term of office was renewed. Paul Biya, who just celebrated twenty years in office, can count his English speeches "on the fingers of one hand." Whenever Paul Biya addresses the Nation, it is done in French, and a journalist carries out an English translation. For some years now, Peter Essoka, a veteran Anglophone journalist, has read the English translation.

Furthermore, parliamentary debates are for the most part carried out in French and most government documents are written in French and then a translation can be done later in English. Road signs and public signs even in Anglophone Cameroon are written in French boldly and, where it exists, an English translation follows underneath, in smaller letters. In addition, school certificates are equally written mostly in French and when they have English translations, the translation is usually heavily flawed. As already noted, the University of Yaoundé (now University of Yaoundé I and II), which was created to be a model bilingual institution is a veritable French institution. In this institution since the teachers are permitted to teach in the language of their choice and most of them are French

speaking, the instruction carried out largely in French to the disadvantage of Anglophone students. With regards to the official equality of English and French in the University of Yaoundé, Wolf rightly argues that “true linguistic equality has never been realized, and the situation at the university may indeed stand for the status of English and French in Cameroon as a whole” (182). In 1967 Vernon Jackson had predicted that

With reference to the future of French and English in Cameroon[...] It does seem however likely that there is less tangible incentive for French-speaking Cameroonians to speak English than there is for English-speaking West Cameroonians to speak French...Unless successful widespread teaching of English is carried out in East Cameroon schools, and unless an incentive is provided to maintain and expand English fluency achieved, it is that the West rather than East Cameroon will be more affected by the present bilingual policy (25).

Jackson based his predictions on two principal factors, which have been corroborated by other researchers: the historical events that have culminated in the present situation, including the quick departure of the British and the continuous presence of the French in Cameroon. The second principal factor is the geographic and demographic situation. In terms of population, the advantage of Francophone Cameroon is about 4-1 and 10-1 in size (Kofele Kale “An African” 62). This demographic proportion has been used by the Francophone dominated government to account for the unequal distribution of ministerial and administrative positions, including programs in French as compared to programs in English in the public media. Yet such an argument discounts the bicultural nature of Cameroon and the legal entity of Anglophone Cameroon within

the union. This imbalance visible in the de facto status of English within Cameroon has led to a solidification of an Anglophone identity.

ENGLISH AND ANGLOPHONE IDENTITY

The promotion and development of language in most countries is invariably tied to formal education and Cameroon is no exception. Hence any investigation of English in Cameroon takes one to the classroom; however, in Anglophone Cameroon, the role of English as a language transcends the classroom. In fact, the fight to maintain English in the classroom has taken place largely outside the classroom. In former British colonies like Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya, where English is an official language, the term “Anglophone” hardly comes into play amongst their citizens. Even during the mandate and trusteeship period, the term Anglophone was not evident among English-speaking Cameroonians, a certain energy has been injected into the term in Cameroon because it lives in opposition to the term Francophone. Being an “Anglophone” in French- dominated Cameroon has become a unique experience in Anglophone Africa and in a world where English is the dominant language of international discourse.

Indeed, the fight to preserve English in Anglophone Cameroon belies the presence of ninety-six ethnic languages in the region but this situation can be better understood when the term Anglophone is closely

looked at from the Cameroon perspective. Tambo Leke defines an Anglophone as:

A person whose first official language, in the context of Cameroon constitution is English. Although Cameroonian Anglophones by this definition may hail from any part of the country, their base is mainly in the South-West and North-West Provinces (Tambo 36).

Expanding on this definition, Alobwede d'Epie explains that "Anglophones should see themselves as a people of varied ethnic languages and cultures but whose individual identities have been made to merge and function in a union of thought moulded by the English Language" (57). However, the wide range of meanings associated with the term "Anglophone" is best captured in Simo Bobda's article "Varying perceptions of English in Cameroon: A diachronic and synchronic analyses".

The term Anglophone, as is understood in Cameroon, has mostly an ethnic connotation. It refers to a member of an ethnic group in North West and South West Provinces which were formally part of British Cameroons[...]the term Anglophone has very little to do with knowledge of the English Language; indeed, an Anglophone in the Cameroon sense does not need to know a word of English.

Thus Anglophone ethnic identity goes beyond language to embrace the socio-cultural. The legal and educational system in Anglophone Cameroon is different from that of Francophone region. Anglophones pride themselves on being different even in other cultural domains like food, social behavior and dress. As an example, in Anglophone regions, loaves of bread are sold on the street and in stores, while baguettes are sold in

Francophone regions. That is why a Francophone who can read and write in English is not considered an Anglophone because although he knows the language, he does not carry the cultural baggage.

Therefore the value of English as an official language for the Anglophone carries other responsibilities. It is tied with their collective identity, the only weapon of unity they have to fight against the Francophone majority. In contrast, and true to majority-minority dynamics, the Francophones do not rally around French as an identity symbol. Thus, fighting for the equality of English Language vis-à-vis the French language in Cameroon has become synonymous with fighting for the rights of Anglophones within Cameroon. As Han-Georg Wolf puts it:

It is the imbalance in every part of Cameroon life, intertwined with the feeling of being losers in the historical processes that have created considerable discontent among the Anglophones. As underdogs...Anglophones rally around English as a common reference point. English is a form of protest against the de facto dominance of French (233).

The Anglophone fight for recognition of their "Englishness," or Anglo-Saxon identity, climaxed in the 1990s. Although the economic crises in the mid-eighties could have led to the demands for change, the climate in the 1990s in Cameroon was fuelled by the global political developments toward liberalization and regime changes in the late- mid-eighties. After enduring three decades of authoritarian rule, the demise of the cold war and the move towards more democratic governments in the former Communist nations of Eastern Europe served as a springboard for Cameroonians and other Africans to ask for reforms, including multi-party

politics. Within this framework, Anglophones in Cameroon mounted pressure for a recognition of their identity and independent status within the Republic of Cameroon. This resulted in the formation of different pressure groups like the Cameroon Anglophone Movement, Southern Cameroon National Council, Free West Cameroon Movement, and All Anglophone Conference etc.

On May 26, 1990, amid government protestations and heavy military presence, John Fru Ndi, an Anglophone, launched a new political party, Social Democratic Front, in the presence of 30,000-40,000 supporters. When the gendarmes could not disperse the crowd with tear gas, they opened fire and six young people were killed (Takougang and Kreiger 105). In anger over this government instigated deaths, John Ngu Foncha, the Anglophone elder statesman who had taken Cameroon into federation with French Cameroon, resigned from his position as the vice-president of the ruling CPDM party. In his resignation letter, Foncha explained that "the Anglophone Cameroonians whom I brought into the union have been ridiculed and referred to as 'Les Biafrains', 'Les enemies dans la maison', 'les traitres' etc.³ and the constitutional provisions which protected this Anglophone minority have been suppressed, their voice drowned while the rule of the gun has replaced the dialogue which Anglophones cherish very much" (qtd. in Konings and Nyamjoh, 215). Although the government eventually recognized this new party, thereby

³ Biafrans, enemies in the house, traitors etc. Anglophones are referred to derogatorily as Biafrans because they were ruled by the British as part of the Eastern Nigeria Province.

ushering in multi-party politics in Cameroon, this event served as a catalyst for social unrest around the country (see Takougang and Kreiger 1998).

In 1993, the Anglophones again took center stage to protect their English system of education, which the government had consistently tried to Francophonize. This was the climax of a ten-year struggle. In 1983, the government reformed the Cameroon General Certificate of Education Ordinary and Advanced Level into a group certificate exam, which made it resemble the Francophone baccalauréat. The Anglophone students at the University of Yaoundé led a strike in protest, which reverberated across major Anglophone towns. The student strikes of 1983 succeeded in forcing the government to cancel the reform. However, the proposed reform came to crystallize, for most Anglophone students, their marginal status within the Republic of Cameroon. Consequently, a letter titled "Open Letter to all English-Speaking Parents of Cameroon from the English-Speaking students of the North-West and South West Provinces" drawn on the 20th of August, 1985 was circulated widely in Cameroon (Nyamjoh 56). This letter catalogued several examples of the Anglophone marginalization in Cameroon and centered on the domination of French system of education, particularly in higher education. This letter was a plea from Anglophone children to their parents to intervene in what they felt would inevitably lead to bloodshed. In fact, the letter warned that if English-speaking parents don't react

We (Anglophone students) shall be forced to believe that our parents sold us to slavery and butchery for their own ends. And rather than revere your memories, your graves will be desecrated and bodily harm done to those of you unlucky to be still alive then" (qtd. in Nyamjoh 61)

The government's reaction to this letter was the widespread intimidation of Anglophone elites and phony promises to improve educational infrastructures for Anglophones. Yet, four years later in 1989, another attempt was made by the then Minister of Education, Georges Ngango, to impose the Francophone structure of four years for the first cycle and three years for the secondary education upon Anglophones. As with the 1983 reform, the result was violent opposition and popular demonstrations by Anglophone students and their parents, which culminated in the dismissal of the Minister and a termination of the reform package.

Thus, by 1992, when widespread irregularities marked the Cameroon GCE emanating from Francophone Yaoundé, Anglophone teachers decided to form the Teacher's Association of Cameroon (TAC). At the top of their agenda was the creation of a GCE board, which had been part of the deal when the University of London transferred full control of the exam to Cameroon. Instead of creating the GCE Board to conduct the exams, the government allowed the Department of Exams at the Ministry of Education to take control. The result was an "alarming and unprecedented widespread mess or abuses with numerous irregularities in the conduct of GCE exams" (Nyamjoh, 75). Frustrated by government's reluctance to create the GCE Board, the members of TAC created and

installed the Cameroon Examination Board in Buea on April 16 1992. On this day, the members of TAC pledged a total commitment to the cause. Amongst their pledges, this one stands out:

- Let us all realize once and for all that the greatest bond that binds:
1. South-Westerners with South-Westerners or
 2. North-Westerners, or
 3. South-Westerners with North-Westerners is our common **Anglo-Saxon⁴ heritage** exemplified through our common educational, legal, cultural and social values which differ very much and are superior to the same values on the other side of the Mungo. (Francophone Cameroon)
- (Cameroon Post NO. 160, April 29 1993, 12 qtd. in Nyamjoh, 75)

Shortly after its inception, the Minister of National Education declared the Cameroon Examination Board illegal and the activities of TAC were thwarted at every given opportunity by the government. The churches, both Catholic and Protestant, petitioned the government to give in to the demands of TAC. In addition, Parent Teacher Associations of Anglophone schools came together to form the Confederation of Parents-Teacher Association in Cameroon (COPTAC). COPTAC later changed its name to Confederation of Anglophone Parents-Teachers Association (CAPTAC). CAPTAC supported the actions of the Teachers Association of Cameroon (TAC) and took a lead in requesting the GCE Examination Board. CAPTAC then organized a heavily attended peaceful demonstration of parents in front of the Ministry of National Education on October 12 1993. The government responded with gendarmes who drenched the parents with water canons and tear gas. In a show of absolute courage, the

⁴ My emphasis

parents endured the tear gas and water without budging. Later that day, the Cameroon government succumbed to Anglophone demands and finally signed the text of application for the Cameroon GCE Board (Nyamjoh 1996). The Board has been in existence now for close to ten years and has been functioning smoothly. Significantly, it is located in Buea, the formal Capital of Southern Cameroons.

While the Cameroon GCE crisis was raging, another milestone in Anglophone identity occurred. Amid intimidation and fear of arrests by the military, about five thousand Anglophones attended the All Anglophone Conference, held in Buea in April 1993. The Conference was convened “for the purpose of adopting a common Anglophone stand on constitutional reform and of examining several other matters related to the welfare of ourselves, our posterity, and our territory” (Buea Declaration, 8 qtd. in Konings and Nyamjoh, 218). The conference followed President Biya’s announcement on, March 1993, of a national debate on constitutional reform. The Conference resulted in “the Buea declaration,” which called for a return to the federal state in order to protect the Anglo-Saxon heritage of Anglophones. This was a historic meeting which later developed into a number of organized Anglophone movements.

Another highlight of this growing Anglophone identity was a workshop on Anglophone Cameroon writing held in Yaoundé. The importance of this workshop was apparent to all. Bearing in mind, the social role of the writer in African communities, Anglophone writers and

intellectuals had a crucial role to play. The purpose of the workshop, therefore, was to highlight “the important role of Anglophone Cameroon writing in the ‘Anglophone movements’, and to redefine (their) socio-cultural political status within the national and international arena [...]” (“Forward” Lyonga, Breitinger and Butake, 9). The workshop was also meant “to take stock of the corpus and volume of Anglophone Cameroon writing, assess its standing, evaluate and redefine its status and its functions in the present situation” (“Forward” Lyonga, Breitinger and Butake, 9).

Addressing the conference participants, the keynote speaker, Bate Besong, Anglophone playwright and poet, referred to Anglophones as the: “biblical children of Ham, profoundly affected by cataclysmic changes and traumas which seem to toss us about like an Eliotean rag doll; hollow men, without speech; caught in the broken jaw, in the lost Kingdom ‘of the prickly...prickly pear at ‘5 O’clock in the morning’ sprawled in the tumid river.” (17) It is with these scars of what Bate Besong calls “brotherhood” that Anglophones rally around English. It thus becomes a matter of urgent necessity for Anglophone writers to perpetuate and maintain the Anglophone identity through writing. That is why Bate Besong made this call to Anglophone writers:

The Anglophone Cameroon writer at home and in the Diaspora must tell the outside world the story of his tragic land from the point of view of its hostage minority. And such a literature, fellow writers, can only be written by you: Anglophone Cameroon writers, in Anglophone Cameroon Language and on Anglophone Cameroonian subjects (18).

It is now ten years since this conference took place and Anglophone Cameroonian writers seem to have responded to the call. In fact, the participants at the conference “acknowledged that there is a substantial corpus of Anglophone Cameroon writing that deserves critical attention” (Lyonga, Breitinger and Butake, 197). The questions that demand answers are: where and how is this literature disseminated? Who is reading it? Has it attracted critical attention? The answers to these questions form the core of the next chapter.

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CHAPTER THREE

DISSEMINATION OF ANGLOPHONE CAMEROON LITERATURE

In 1982 Nalova Lyonga and Bole Butake, two Anglophone Cameroonian critics, declared, "Cameroon literature in English is belatedly in the bud; still experimental in the main [...] in terms of what has been published, both locally and abroad, there is very little indeed" ("Cameroon" 121). It is now over twenty years since Butake and Lyonga made their assessment. The publishing climate has not changed much, although the corpus of literature has increased and Anglophone writers are slowly getting to be known outside their immediate locale. Despite the importance of oral literature in Africa, it is generally accepted that the book makes the writer. The book as object begins its journey from the publisher with the intention of getting to the reader. Mary Jay, a senior consultant at the African Book Collective explains in detail the role of a publisher thus:

The publisher commissions a book, or evaluates unsolicited manuscripts; investigates co-publishing possibilities; edits the manuscript; develops a positive and dynamic working relationship with the author in terms of development of the book, contract, promotion and accountability; clears reproduction fees/copyright permissions; prepares an estimate of costs and sales, and sets price; oversees design and layout of the book; commissions illustrations; produces camera-ready copy, or manuscripts for typesetting; decides on print run; puts the printing back to tender; oversees and monitors the printing process; undertakes advance promotion; promotes and markets the published book, involving the author in, for example, reading, broadcasting, promotion tours etc.; distributes to booksellers; libraries, Ministries, schools and universities, institutions, and individuals; [...] The publisher is thus the center of the book publishing chain: writer, publisher, bookseller, reader ("Getting Published" 211).

Although not all of these components would be necessary for every title, the publisher remains the launching pad of the book chain. He sets the book in motion towards the reader and he only genuinely succeeds when the book reaches the maximum number of target readers.

Setting the stage: An overview of literary publishing in Anglophone Africa

Publishing in Africa is generally in a crisis now. The foremost publisher of African literature, Heinemann, announced in February 2003 that the African Writers Series created forty years ago, which launched African literature on the international market, has been discontinued (Songolo, online posting). The only types of books in Africa with a ready market are textbooks. Publishing of general literature is almost stagnant. The economic crisis that has been ravaging the continent from the mid eighties led to the devaluation of currencies in many African nations. The importation of paper, ink and other printing materials, which were already expensive, has become unattainable. International trade has proven unprofitable and most multinational publishers have reduced the number of African writers they publish each year and have closed some of the regional offices, which had been opened. Most of the indigenous publishers who were barely making ends meet have closed shop. Because of this, during the past two decades critics have claimed that Africa is experiencing a “book famine”, Africa is in a “painful illiterate bind” and Africa has become a “bookless society”.

These descriptions are in comparison with what obtained during the first 25 years of independence in most Anglophone African Nations. At independence

most books in Africa were imported from Europe. In the case of Anglophone Africa, the books came from Britain since the education syllabus was patterned after Britain. British multinational publishing houses like Oxford University Press (OUP), Macmillan, Heinemann, Nelson, and Longman dominated book publishing in Anglophone Africa. The nationalism which fuelled the fight for independence in most African countries, also led to the Africanization of the school syllabus. Literate Africans now felt the need to write their own histories and literature to change the perception of Africans in European authored books. Since the publication of Nigeria's Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* in 1958, which launched modern African Literature, literary creativity in Anglophone Africa has since risen and fallen with the publishing fortunes of Nigeria. After the huge success of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Heinemann founded the African Writer's series and hired Chinua Achebe to be the first editor. Achebe was not only an editor, he also scouted for authors. By 1972 when Achebe left the series, Heinemann had published 100 titles on the African Writer's Series. The 100th title was Achebe's *Girls at War*.

These 100 titles showed a heavy presence of writers from Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, and Ghana. There are a few reasons that accounted for the early literary success of these countries. They had all inherited viable infrastructures necessary for a literary culture at independence. Infrastructures like a printing press, university, growing urban centers and a sizable population educated in English. For example, the University of Makerere in Kampala established in 1939 to provide higher education for the whole of East Africa became a nesting ground

for artists from different regions. The university student journal *Penpoints* provided an opportunity for aspiring artists to have their works in print. As Mohamed Bakari and Ali Mazuri argue, it was in Makerere that “the first examples of literature drawing on the East African experience were created” (qtd. in Elder, 52). Some of these artists include famous names in African literature like Ngugi and Okot P’ Bitek. Equally, the University of Ibadan, founded in 1943 as an extension of the University of London, provided ferment for young Nigerian writers. As a matter of fact, these budding artists created the Mbari writer’s club and Mbari publications in July 1961. Mbari, largely inspired by Ulli Beier, launched the journal *Black Orpheus*, which published the writings of authors from Nigeria and other regions of Africa. Some of these authors who were hardly known at the time but are now celebrities of African literature, include Dennis Brutus, Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, and Tchikaya Utamsi (Hans Zell, 378). These university centers also served as venues for intellectual activities; for example, the historical African Literature Conference held in Kampala in 1962 which was very significant in fostering East African literature. It is at this conference that Achebe read Ngugi’s *Weep Not Child* and recommended it for publishing in the African Writers Series. This publication launched Ngugi’s career on the international market.

With its large population, Nigeria has always had a profitable market for books. Chinua Achebe claimed he sold 20,000 copies of *Things Fall Apart* in Nigeria alone in 1964 as compared to 800 copies in Britain and 2,500 copies in all other places (“Morning” 68). This evidence of a viable market attracted

investors like the multinational publishers who quickly established regional branches in Nigeria and this in turn gave Nigerians increased publishing opportunities. By the mid-sixties British publishers were publishing about six Nigerian novels each year (Griswold, 62). In the seventies Nigeria was booming with oil money and with the increasing number of literate African youth, Griswold confirms that “the Nigerian market was the prize as the country had the numbers, the naira [Nigerian currency], and the burgeoning educational system” (62). Indigenous publishers like Ethiope, Oniboje, Fourth Dimensions, as well as university presses attached to the several universities in Nigeria blossomed. This boom in indigenous publishing also occurred in the other Anglophone regions like Kenya. In Kenya, the East Africa publishing house founded in 1965 started indigenous publishing. Although later the East African countries broke apart, literary publishing continued to thrive in Kenya. From 1973-1976, Kenya enjoyed a significant growth of indigenous publishing houses. Ten new indigenous houses were established: Pan African Researchers Ltd.; Comb Books, TransAfrica Publishers, Ltd.; Bookwise, Ltd.; Shungwaya Publishers, Ltd.; Gazelle Books; Uzima Press, Ltd.; Evangel Publishing House; Gakara Press; and Foundation Books (Okwanya 89). In addition, The Heinemann Educational Books regional office for East Africa changed to East African Publishers in 1986 and this was headed by the veteran East African publisher, Henry Chakava. The works published here include titles by Ngugi and local editions of Africa’s major writers like Achebe, Armah, and Peter Abrahams. Although these Anglophone African Nations like Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya have been undergoing a crisis in

the past decade and more, they are still ahead of other Anglophone African countries that did not inherit at independence some of these infrastructures necessary for a literary culture and whose writers did not get the international exposure from multinational publishers. One such colonial territory is Anglophone Cameroon.

Publishing and Anglophone Cameroon Literature

The Foreign Ventures

While Nigerian literature was launched in London, Anglophone Cameroonians launched theirs in Nigeria. Taking advantage of the publishing infrastructures and a shared colonial history, Sankie Maimo, published *I Am Vindicated*, a drama, with Ibadan University Press in 1959. Maimo was teaching in a secondary school in Nigeria when this text got published. *I Am Vindicated* dramatizes a conflict between modernity and tradition represented by Bola, a schoolboy, and Baba Kasim, the village fetish priest. However, modernity is made to triumph when Bola reveals Baba Kasim as a charlatan and he commits suicide. This text became the first published literary text by an Anglophone Cameroonian. Maimo sold over one thousand copies in Nigeria and the book was a school text in the May Flower Ikenne Secondary School in Nigeria where he was a drama teacher. When the Biafran civil war broke out in Nigeria in 1966, Maimo returned to Cameroon, bringing along fifty copies of *I Am Vindicated* which were sold in Cameroon. Kraus, a European publisher, reprinted the play in 1970 but this reprint never made it into the Cameroon market because a copy

cost 9,000CFA at the time (Maimo interview). However, a second edition was published in Cameroon in 1985.

Then in 1969, Lagos African University Press (which later became Pilgrim Publishers) published *Promise*, by Jedida Asheri, the pen name of a talented Cameroonian woman who died some years ago. This first text from an Anglophone Cameroon woman is an effectively written autobiography of a young girl's coming of age. The story is set in Bansaw in Anglophone Cameroon. In addition, Oxford University Press, Ibadan, published Nsanda Eba's bildungsroman, *The Good Foot*, in 1977, seven years after it was written. (Eba Interview). But at this time and even today only works published by multinational publishers were effectively disseminated.

To earn money and fame as a writer one had to publish with one of these multi-nationals like Heinemann, Fontana, and Macmillan. Some aspiring Anglophone writers sent their writings abroad, but the outcome was not always favorable due to the problems of publishing far away from the home base. One such writer was Linus Asong. His correspondence with Heinemann and Fontana Paperbacks exemplify some of the problems Anglophone Cameroonians encountered with foreign publishers.

By 1975 Linus Asong, a secondary school teacher at the time, had written two novels, *The Crown of Thorns* and *A Stranger in His home Land*, which he previously titled *Still-Born* and *Outside Forces*. Asong sent *A Stranger in his Home Land*, which was over three hundred pages long to Heinemann Educational Publishers in London who were the main publishers of African

literature. On the 17th of March 1976 he got a reply from Heinemann, the letter signed by Elizabeth Ledermann and copied to James Currey reads:

Dear Mr. Asong, I am afraid that our readers feel that *A Stranger in His Homeland* is rather too long [...]. We should be willing to reconsider it in a shortened version.

While Mr. Asong continued negotiating on *A Stranger in His Homeland*, he also sent in a manuscript of *The crown of Thorns*. In another letter dated 30th September 1977, James Currey, the then Editor of the African Writers' series wrote:

We've had quite a warm reaction to *Crown of Thorns*. I am airmailing it to our East African company for further assessment. We only do this on a small proportion of manuscripts we receive. We have spent so much time considering *A Stranger in His Homeland* which was previously *Still-Born* and *Outside Forces* that we cannot consider it further until we have made up our minds about the more promising *Crown of Thorns*.

However by 29th April 1978 Asong had not received Heinemann's verdict on *The Crown of Thorns*, so he wrote to Heinemann again. James Currey replied in a letter dated 8th June 1978:

I am sorry not to have replied before to your letter of 29th April 1978 but our East African office has found it difficult to extract a report from their advisers on your manuscript *The Crown of Thorns*. However they have now done so and Mr. Laban Erapu will be able to bring their reactions when he visits London at the end of June.

I apologise for the delay but I hope to be able to give you our decision after discussions with Mr. Erapu within the next few weeks.

One wonders why the East African office found it difficult to "extract a report" from their advisers. The communications with Heinemann continued, but at the

end none of Asong's works were published. Asong had also sent the manuscript of *The Crown of Thorns* to Fontana Paperbacks also based in London. Fontana sent the following reply in a letter dated 28th February 1977, signed by Carolyn Caughey:

Dear Mr. Asong, I was very impressed with *The Crown of Thorns* and I think there's an excellent chance that we will want to publish it, but I must consult first with our Nigerian associates. I am sending the manuscript today and I hope that I will have further news for you within a month or two.

The Nigeria branch of Fontana appreciated the high quality of Asong's work and after much correspondence with Fontana, the books were still not published because of limited finances. In the absence of a viable indigenous publisher, Asong gave up, put his manuscripts in the drawer and waited for the day he could open his own publishing firm (Asong, Personal interview). This he did in 1990. He has since published *The Crown of Thorns* (1990), and *A Stranger in His Own Homeland* (1998) fifteen and twenty-three years after they were written.

Asong's experiences show the problems that aspiring Anglophone Cameroon writers faced with foreign publishers like Heinemann and Fontana. Heinemann and Fontana never had a problem with Asong's quality of writing. The fact that Asong's works had to be judged far away from his primary audience base was a problem. Although Heinemann and Fontana had African representatives, they were not from Anglophone Cameroon and this still created a cultural distance between Anglophone Cameroon writers and the publishers. The Heinemann East African Bureau could more readily support a book written

by an East African than one written by an Anglophone Cameroonian. To illustrate this point, the fact that fifty percent of the first twenty titles on the African Writers Series were written by Ibos from Nigeria was not unconnected to the fact that Achebe, the editor of the series during its first ten years was an Ibo. As Griswold reports, "of the fifteen Nigerian novelists published in AWS before 1980, only five were not Igbo" (62). There was a cultural proximity between Achebe and the Ibo writers regardless of their outstanding creative ability.

The distance of the foreign publisher was not only cultural, it was physical. In the case of Heinemann, while Achebe was editor, he was based in Nigeria and all the manuscripts were sent to him from London to read. When James Curry became editor, after Achebe, he further complicated the system of selecting manuscripts in an attempt at broad-based decision-making. All the manuscripts short-listed had to be sent to all the three companies (agencies) of Heinemann Educational Books (Unwin and Curry, 5-6). This system meant to put the series in touch with its market proved tortuous. From Asong's correspondence, one finds that after more than two years Asong's manuscript had only moved from the London office to the Eastern bureau office, and was yet to make it back to the London office for the final verdict. This was a considerable waste of time and this period of waiting could be very defeating for a creative writer.

Another pitfall of the Heinemann publishers was their reliance on the textbook market and the impact it had on editorial policy. The editors demanded that the novels be short, as in Asong's *A Stranger in His Homeland*, which was above three hundred pages. Books on the African Writer's series ranged

between one hundred and fifty to two hundred pages. Heinemann claimed this had to do with cost so that students could acquire the text cheaply, but this ended up affecting creativity, as some of the works could not be shortened without losing the story.

In sum, therefore, only a few African writers actually published with the big multinational national publishers, and because of the educational systems in African countries, which relied on these books, the writers were quickly canonized, making it difficult for new writers to be published or disseminated. Among these lucky few were francophone Cameroonians, Mongo Beti, Ferdinand Oyono and Mbella Sone Dipoko. To sustain the African Writers Series, Heinemann shopped for African writers, who were based in Paris, and had produced well-written works in French. Because of the French colonial policy of assimilation, writers from former French colonies found their way in print first before their Anglophone counterparts. There was already a vibrant African literary community in Paris in the sixties, which had developed from the Négritude tradition and was creating a dynamic black aesthetic. The works translated included Oyono's *Une Vie de Boy* (*Houseboy*) and Mongo Beti's *Mission Terminé* (*Mission to Kala*), which have erroneously been considered by some readers as written by English-speaking Cameroonians. In fact, due to the widespread use of English, these works are disseminated more in their English translations. Heinemann also published Mbella Sone Dipoko's *A few Nights and Days* in 1964 and *Because of Women* in 1968. Although a Francophone by geographic origin, Mbella Sone Dipoko studied in English and wrote his novels

originally in English. Consequently it has become customary for bibliographers to classify him as an Anglophone Cameroon writer.

Therefore, technically, Kenjo Wan Jumbam is the first Anglophone Cameroonian to publish with the Heinemann African Writer's Series. Jumbam was a Postgraduate student at the University of Leeds in England when he sent his first manuscript, a love story to Heinemann. It was rejected but Jumbam continued writing. Jumbam had been writing for five years when Heinemann accepted Jumbam's *Lukong and the Leopard with The White Man of Cattle* for young readers in 1975. Arnold describes this volume as "an unassuming pair of beautifully told tales in unnoticeably contrived folk style [...] intended for secondary students but a pleasure for all ages" (Arnold "Preface" 508). Then in 1980 *The White Man of God* was published in the African Writers Series. *The White Man of God* records the coming of age of Tansa, as he faces the complexities of Christianity, especially the concept of a loving God (father) who can send his children to hell. Jumbam is a gifted writer and Arnold confirmed this in the early eighties by commenting that "Jumbam is a writer of international stature and will certainly be widely known before long" (508). Unfortunately, the reduced activities of Heinemann on the continent and the difficulties of publishing in Cameroon have left Jumbam with many unpublished manuscripts. His most recent unpublished manuscript written in 2002 is entitled *Limbe Camp*, which in his opinion surpasses *The White Man of God* (Jumbam, E-mail interview). Anglophone Cameroonians also got a chance with other foreign publishers although the number is negligible. For example, Longman published Comfort

Ashu's *Ayamoh's Days at School* in 1985, Mokoso Ndeley's *Man Pass Man* in 1987, and *Balafon*, the first Anglophone literature anthology. Macmillan published Maurice Sotabinda's *Life is a Lottery* and the *Money Doublers* in their Pacesetters series, while Ngonwikwo published *Taboo Love with Exposition* Press in New York.

Indigenous Cameroon Publishers:

The problems of publishing abroad were tragically highlighted by the absence of publishing houses and other infrastructures that promoted a viable literary culture in Anglophone Cameroon. Administered as part of the Eastern Nigeria Province by the British, the region was greatly neglected in education, as seen in the previous chapter. At the time West Cameroon gained independence by joining the newly independent East Cameroon, it had only three secondary schools, few teacher-training colleges, and no university. The federal university established in Yaoundé in 1962 continues to be principally a French University.

In 1963, two years after Southern Cameroons and The Republic of Cameroon merged to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon, the publishing house, Éditions CLE was born. Éditions CLE was an initiative of the Protestant churches in Africa. This initiative benefited from the support of Dutch and Protestant churches with powerful recommendations from different ecumenical bodies. Éditions CLE with headquarters in Yaoundé, Cameroon, set itself the goal of "promoting, developing and disseminating the African cultural patrimony and Christian thinking by Africans on Africa" (Dihang Jean, 129). By the first ten years, Éditions Cle had moved from publishing one text in 1963 to thirty texts

annually for 1972 and 1973. Éditions CLE published texts from all over francophone Africa, but Cameroonian authors formed fifty percent of the works published. This confirms that productivity increases when the publisher and authors share the same physical and cultural environment. However, since Éditions CLE catered principally to a francophone audience, they did not publish works in English. Nevertheless, Éditions CLE published Maimo's second work *Sov-Mbang, the Soothsayer* in 1968, a drama. This play continues Maimo's theme of conflict between tradition and modernity explored in *I am Vindicated*, but this time African traditions triumph over western values. Maimo explains that the publishing of his play by Éditions CLE was "a matter of chance." As the premier editor of ABBIA (Cameroon's first bilingual literary review) published by Éditions CLE, Maimo had the chance of working with the then manager of Éditions CLE who took an interest in his works. When the manager read *Sov-Mbang the Soothsayer*, he decided to publish it (Maimo E-mail interview). Therefore, this was not a typical Édition CLE production. Éditions CLE just served as printer. The play was a mimeograph although it carried the Éditions CLE logo for drama texts, "CLE Theatre". Consequently the publication of *Sov-Mbang, the Soothsayer* did not pave the way for publications in English. It remained a lone venture while CLE continued to launch the careers of many francophone writers who became prominent like Guillaume Oyono Mbida and Francis Bebey. Anglophones continued looking for avenues to publish their works. Nonetheless, *Sov-Mbang the Soothsayer* became a recommended text in the University of Yaoundé for a couple of years.

Thus, to talk about publishing or where Anglophone writers have published, this writer agrees with Arnold that “we must be willing to relax the strict sense of the term publish” (503). In order to make their works known, budding Anglophone writers read their poems on radio during literary programs like Buma Kor’s Young Writer’s Forum broadcast on Radio Buea in the 70’s. Others, like Vincent Nchami, started writing stories for BBC by 1949. He ended up selling about twenty stories but never succeeded in publishing any (Arnold, “Cameroon” 505). Some writers also took their works, particularly poems and short stories, to newspapers and literary reviews for publication. The Bilingual Journal *ABBIA*, launched in 1963 and edited by Bernard Fonlon, gave many writers their first serious outlet in print. These writers included Abety, Mbeboh, Jumbam, Kor, and Butake. Others like Babila Mutia and Bate Besong while studying in universities in Nigeria, published poems in Nigerian journals and Newspapers. Furthermore, in 1979, Bole Butake launched *The Mould*, a magazine of creative writing, in the University of Yaoundé. The Mould was printed as a mimeograph and about one hundred to one hundred and fifty copies were reproduced. This magazine edited and sponsored by Butake, printed short stories, poems, and interviews with writers and literary analysis by critics. It was a major literary outlet for Anglophones, especially budding student writers. One of these budding student writers, Juliana Abbenyi, has recently published a collection of short stories, *Your Madness, not Mine*, with Ohio University Press. Unfortunately, *The Mould* folded after seven editions when the editor/financial sponsor could no longer afford it (Butake, Telephone Interview).

Butake also edited and printed a mimeograph *Thunder on the Mountain*, a collection of poems. It was done on stencil and cyclostyled at the University of Yaoundé. *Thunder on the Mountain* comprised some poems, which had appeared in *The Mould* and *ABBIA*. Unfortunately, works in mimeograph formats and in newspapers are easily lost without a literary archive to preserve them for posterity. Thus, most of this early literature is unavailable in Cameroon. Indeed Butake reports that by 1994, he no longer had a copy of *Thunder on the Mountain*. Fortunately, a clerk at the Department of Geography, University of Yaoundé, where the collection of poems was typed and cyclostyled, brought him a forgotten copy in 2000. The brand-new copy is now a treasure in Butake's home library. Luckily, Longman published some of these early works, particularly poems and short stories, in the first anthology of Anglophone Cameroon literature titled, *Balafon*. *Balafon* includes Peter Abety's "The Rightful Heir" and Butake's "The Way of the City," both short stories. The volume also contains poems by Kitts Mbeboh, Meshack Takere, and Victor Tarkang, drama excerpts from Sankie Maimo's *Sov- Mbang, the Soothsayer* and Elame Victor Musinga's *Mr. No-Balance*, and novel excerpts from Ngonwikwuo's *Taboo Love*, Kenjo Jumbam's *The White Man of God* and Nsanda Eba's *The Good Foot*. The anthology also included critical essays by Talla Kashim, Bernard Fonlon, and Ojong Ayuk.

Preserving and stocking national literature is not yet happening in Cameroon, where the creation of a national library and its regional branches is yet to materialize, although a central service at the Ministry of Culture is in

charge of the National Library and public reading. It is only recently that the Prime Minister signed the texts of application for Law No 2000/05 of 17th April 2001 relating to legal deposit. This law requires six copies of all published works of art, including graphic art and photography to be deposited at the National library on the first day that they are made available to the public (Wirsiy and Shafack). Unfortunately, in the absence of a veritable National library this law has no impact and does very little to change the situation.

With the establishment of the state owned CEPER, which was created from the former UNESCO print office and SOPECAM (Société de Presse et d'édition du Cameroun), new publishing opportunities opened for Cameroonians, but these state- owned publishing outfits were more printers than publishers. As sub-publishers, they re-issued local editions of some titles on the Heinemann's African Writer's Series which rendered the cost price cheap for Cameroonians. For example, Ngugi's *The River Between* sold for 335CFA instead of about 1500CFA (Kotei, "Book" 93) However to most Anglophone writers, they were just printers. Writers had to pay upfront for their works to be printed. According to Bole Butake, writers usually took their work already typed to CEPER where it was typeset, mounted manually and printed. Nobody read the work at CEPER and SOPECAM (Butake, Telephone interview). CEPER printed works like Bole Butake's *Rape of Michelle*, Gahlia Gwangwa'a's collection of poems and Takere Meshack's Kingfisher poetry series. SOPECAM also printed Butake's *Survivors*, Muffuh Benedicta's play *The Rebel*, and Sankie Maimo's *Succession in Sarkov*. *Succession in Sarkov* became Maimo's bestseller in Cameroon, when the Fon of

Nso, Ngah Binfon II, died in very mysterious circumstances just like the Fon in *Sucession in Sarkov*. Consequently, many people bought the book out of curiosity, believing the death of the Fon had been predicted (Maimo, Personal interview). Also, a televised version of the play acted by the Flame Players in 1988 was screened several times on the national television station in Cameroon. This added to the popularity of the play.

Furthermore, the few Anglophones who went into literary publishing were actually writers who had nowhere to publish their works so they created “publishing houses”. Most of these publishers belong to the category of publishers popularly known as “shoe string” publishers. Usually the author is the publisher and bookseller. Sankie’s Cowrie Publishers is an example of this. Originally Cowrie Publishers was an idea that emanated from the success of *The Mould*, the literary magazine edited by Bole Butake. The overwhelming number of manuscripts received by *The Mould* revealed the tragic void created by the absence of an English-speaking publisher. Hence, Butake and others, working closely with Sankie Maimo, decided to set up Cowrie Publishers. The logo was designed but along the way the others dropped out and it ended up being Maimo’s lone venture. Under Cowrie Publishers, Sankie published his *Twilight Echoes*, a collection of poems and *The Mask*, a drama.

Bet & Co Ltd., established in 1986, was another attempt to fill the Anglophone publishing void. Again the term publishing is used here with reservation. The Acronym “Bet” actually stands for Butake, Eyoh and Tallah, three creative writers and university lecturers teaching at the time with the

University of Yaoundé. This was no publishing company as such. The working idea as revealed by Butake was that when each of the founders had a book to publish, he funded the printing under the name Bet and Co Ltd., hoping that some day with funds from government subventions or foreign aid, a real publishing house will be put in place (Butake, Telephone Interview). In this manner Bet and Co “published” Butake’s *Lake God*, a play inspired by the Cameroon Lake Nyos disaster that killed 1700 people. Ndumbe Eyoh’s *Munyenge* (a play for children) and *The Inheritance* respectively. Without government subventions and due to the high cost of materials, printing became costly and most of these attempts in indigenous publishing only survived a few publications. Cowrie publishers folded and Bet and Co (pub) Ltd. ceased to exist in 1993 as the founders experimented with other publishing opportunities. This means that most Anglophone Cameroon writers have had to pay for publishing their own work and “royalty” is a word they are yet to deal with except when their works are adopted for the school curriculum.

One Anglophone publisher who has maintained some form of publishing over the years is Buma Kor. He has refused to close his publishing house despite the difficulties. He also combines the activities of author, printer, and bookseller. Maybe Buma Kor’s resilience comes from his close associations with the beginnings of written Anglophone Cameroon literature. There was little organized literary activity in Anglophone Cameroon by 1970 when Buma Kor created the Drama and Speech Performer’s Society as part of activities of the Presbyterian Youth Center in Victoria. This drama group, encouraged by Mr. Primo Bursik, a

German fraternal worker with the Presbyterian mission, presented the first performance of Maimo's *Sov Mbang the Soothsayer* (Kor, "The Literature" 71). Also, as an Anglophone representative for APEC (National Association of Cameroon Poets and writers in its French acronym), Kor had the task of organizing the region's literary talent. He ran a Radio program "Young Writer's Forum" on radio Buea, the only radio station at the time in Anglophone Cameroon. In order to get writers for the program Kor visited several schools in the Anglophone region where he explained the role of APEC and encouraged young writers. With the help of some education officers, Kor organized a writers and artists workshop, which met twice monthly at the Baptist Teachers Training Center in Buea (71). The result of these workshops was the first exhibition of Anglophone Cameroon writing during the first Agro-pastoral show in 1973 in Buea. During the exhibition a twenty-page stapled mimeograph, which can rightly be termed the first bibliography of Anglophone Cameroon Literature, with names of writers and titles of their works, was handed out (Buma Kor Personal interview). This mimeograph is now unavailable in Cameroon and Arnold reports, "the US Library of Congress threw out the copy it had by some miracle obtained" (503).

Probably inundated with manuscripts from the Young Writer's Forum, Kor felt the urgent need of a publishing house. He attended a publishing course with Daystar Publishers of Ibadan, Nigeria, and on his return home, had some in-service training with Presbook in Victoria, in Anglophone Cameroon. In 1974 he established his publishing house under his own name. He was able to publish a

few books, including a second edition of *Sov-Mbang, the Soothsayer*, a second edition of Fonlon's *The Genuine Intellectual*, Rene Philombe's *Tales from My Hut* translated by Richard Bjornson and Buma Kor's own collection of verse, *Searchlight Poems*. As the economic crisis of the mid-eighties in Africa loomed, Buma Kor hardly published anything but he refused to close his publishing house and in the 1990s he picked up steam again, this time with the ambition of starting a Cameroon Writers Series in English. There was a lot of groundwork done for this series and Bole Butake was selected as the editor in chief. Buma Kor arranged for the printing to be done in South Africa so as to achieve good-quality printing. In an email to Charles Larson for the publication of Larson's book *The Ordeal of the African Writer*, Buma Kor reported that print runs for the titles have been 3000 copies, but he is hoping that two of the titles will be adopted as school texts which will lead to 10,000 copies being printed. Kor hoped that a novel by Alobwede D'Epie *Daughter of the Upstream Python* would reach 30,000 copies. (qtd. in Larson 108). However this writer's discussions with Buma Kor in January 2003 revealed that due to under-capitalization, these projects as envisaged did not take off. Even *Zingraff and the Battle of Mankon*, a play successfully staged in Cameroon on several occasions, slated for publication by Buma Kor, could not be published and the authors Butake and Doho were forced to take it to another publisher, the relatively new Patron Publishers in Bamenda.

In the meantime, Buma Kor is Secretary General of Africa Book Development (ABD) created in 1996. This is "a non-profit organization with a regional character to fulfill a continent-wide need to revive a long-term goal of

UNESCO to create Book Development Councils in African Countries as coordinating bodies for promoting national book strategies" (Kor, "Booklinks"). ABD believes that the problem of publishing in Africa cannot be solved without the participation of African governments; hence ABD was set up as a lobbying body to public authorities to establish decisive book policies and also to carry out national book strategies in individual countries. With the support of UNESCO, ABD organized a one-day discussion on book development in Cameroon on the 16th of January 2002. Following the success of this discussion the Ministry of Culture organized a forum on books and reading from April 10-12 2002 at the Yaoundé Conference Center. This forum had the objective of "defining a national book policy and national sectoral strategies for inter-professional cooperation and an integrated approach to book promotion and reading in Cameroon" (Kor, "Booklinks"). However, while looking into means and ways of raising the necessary capital to continue publishing books, Buma Kor has launched a Christian newspaper called *The Christian Times*. Buma Kor, the man and his publishing house, have become a symbol of Anglophone Cameroon Literature, exemplifying a will to survive despite enormous odds.

It is this same will that characterizes Patron Publishing House (PPH) in Bamenda. Launched in 1990, it is another author-printer venture owned by the prolific Anglophone Cameroon novelist, Asong Linus. In an interview with the writer, Asong reveals that PPH aims to publish prose, poetry and drama with the goal to publish "the best" in Anglophone writing. Although Patron Publishers is a one-man venture, Asong makes use of external readers. At least three readers

read a manuscript for a 25,000 FRS (CFA) fee per script. Approval by two readers is enough for the script to be considered for publication. Despite the cost of publishing Asong has succeeded in bringing out 32 titles. His own writings account for six of these titles. Titles published by PPH are funded in three different ways. A writer whose manuscript is chosen for publication pays for the entire process of publishing and does his own distribution. The writer could also partially pay for the cost of printing and share the profit with the publishers or PPH bears the entire cost, distributes the work and then pays royalties to the writer. So far most of the writers published have had to pay for their works.

Furthermore, PPH publishes five hundred print runs for each of their books. Decisions on print runs by publishers or writers in Cameroon are based mostly on cost rather than the size of the audience. However, Asong's greatest challenge as a publisher is balancing profit and quality. There are writers who can pay for the publishing of their work even if the work is not publishable and there are writers who have good scripts but their works sometimes cannot be published because PPH cannot finance them. PPH also suffers from a lack of adequate personnel. After the death of his closest collaborator, Asong has found it cumbersome to combine university teaching (at École Normale Supérieure, Annexe Bambili) and publishing. Yet he believes that so far he has been able to balance quality and profit (Personal Interview). As Dessaur notes:

The true publisher moves with equal comfort in the world of mind and art and in the world of commerce. This may not be a common personality combination; in fact it is probably rare. But it appears to be an indispensable prerequisite for achievement in book publishing. Publishers who consistently disrespect the demands for quality and worth for manuscripts they publish, will despite

temporary successes, find their enterprises dying spiritual starvation in the end; just as publishers who consistently ignore the commercial need of their establishment will find before long that cultural opportunities are negated by bankruptcy (37).

Asong strives to be a true publisher. He claims that PPH sales are good and he is comfortable with the quality of creativity in the works published. How long his enterprise will last is yet to be seen.

To add to Asong's activities, Éditions CLE, after close to thirty years, has decided to publish literature in English. This new decision was launched with a publication of Butake's collection of plays, *Lake God and Other Plays* in 1999. This volume contains Butake's earlier published plays and two new plays *Shoes and Four Men in Arms*, and *Dance of Vampires* not published before. Éditions CLE has also published Bate Besong's *Change Waka and His Man Sawa Boy*, and Anne Tanyi Tang's *Eneta versus Elimo* and *Ewa and Other Plays*. Butake's Collection of Plays and Tanyi-Tang's *Ewa and Other plays* are on the secondary school syllabus. "Éditions CLE pays royalties for the books at the end of each school year. So while Walter Bgoya declares that nothing is being published by Éditions CLE "nowadays" (77) referring to the drop in fiction publishing in French, something is actually coming from Éditions CLE "nowadays" in English. In addition Nooremac Press, the oldest Anglophone publishing house, which specialized in textbook publishing, has since the mid-eighties published a few Anglophone literary texts.

Thus a few opportunities are opening up for Anglophone writers although they are still largely under-served when it comes to publishing. As Arnold argues,

If the creation of fictions is a genetically human characteristic, a feature of modern, technological and urban human societies is the creation of written literature which depends on reading [...] from whatever cause it may stem, the lack of literary infrastructure in Anglophone Cameroon can be called a systemic denial of Anglophone Cameroonians' basic rights to create and consume written fictions and not to be left in the anomalous situation of being well along the path yet still primarily an oral culture where fictions are concerned (45).

Despite the handicap in literary infrastructures, Anglophone writers who make it to print compete favorably with other Anglophone African writers. Without a prize to win in his own country, Bate Besong won the coveted Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) award in drama for his play *Requiem for the Last Kaiser* in 1994. For a non-Nigerian to win a literary award in a country like Nigeria, which is the home of outstanding literary artists in Africa, is a feat worth commending. In 1992, Bole Butake for his play *The Survivors* and Tanla Kinshani for his poetry collection, *Konglanjo!*, were shortlisted for the same prize in the drama and poetry category respectively (Ngwane 26). Moreover, the *Encyclopedia of African Literature* published in 2003 by Simon Gikandi, includes Anglophone Cameroon writers, Kenjo Jumbam, Bole Butake and Bate Besong. In addition, with the establishment of the University of Buea, the only university in Anglophone Cameroon out of six in the entire country, there is hope for the future of literary creativity and publishing. The university not only offers a course in publishing, it is also providing an all Anglophone academic environment for Anglophone students, which engenders a sense of identity necessary for meaningful creativity.

According to publishers like Asong and Buma Kor, the high number of manuscripts they receive proves that Anglophone Cameroonians don't lack writers. This was evident even when Guinness Cameroon organized a writing competition in 1978. The results of the contest were overwhelming. Some of the writers who won in this competition like Butake and Asong have since established themselves as accomplished writers. (See Arnold's "Orphans of the Commonwealth").

Publishing relies on mostly imported material, and without government subventions most writers have to pay from their pockets to get their works published, an investment which is practically impossible for most aspiring writers. Thus Anglophone publishers are caught up in a "no-win" situation. They should be able to take advantage of the vacuum created by the restricted flow of imported books, but this is not possible because of the huge costs involved in importing the materials necessary to publish locally. The demand for locally produced books is there but it cannot be met. Hans Zell rightly confirms, "A viable indigenous publishing industry that can produce books on a scale that matches local needs, sadly, is still largely a dream in most parts of the continent" (370).

In 1986 Richard Bjornson published a bibliography of Cameroon literature in the journal *Research in African Literatures* and ninety percent of the entries for literature by Anglophone writers were unpublished manuscripts. The 1993 bibliography of Anglophone Cameroon writers in *Anglophone Cameroon Writing* edited by Lyonga, Bretinger and Butake, reveals that some of these unpublished manuscripts have been published, and others are still waiting to be published.

However, publishing the text is, just the beginning of the dissemination process. The next hurdle facing publishers and writers is how to get the published works into the hands of potential readers.

Distribution: Bookshops and Libraries

Bookshops and libraries are vital wings of the book chain. They are established intermediaries through which readers can get to the books they desire. In a healthy literary environment these intermediaries boost reading through publicizing the materials they own and stocking items readers are interested in. Libraries and bookshops usually get their books from wholesale booksellers or directly from the publisher.

In Anglophone Cameroon, the most established bookseller is Presbook. Presbook is owned by the Presbyterian mission and therefore has relative financial stability. The Presbyterian mission also owns a printing press. Presbook is a wholesale bookseller especially for textbooks on the primary and secondary school curriculum. Since Presbook is a sister branch of the Presbyterian printing press, they also get wholesale distribution of the books printed by Presbyterian Printing Press. However, most publishers of Anglophone literature publish on a very small scale and as such they individually arrange for their own distribution. Usually this entails placing their books in bookshops of their choice usually on a 20% commission basis. The publishers also sell the books directly to the public. Where books have an official launching, a good number are sold. Most books by PPH are officially launched in a ceremony where the community shows their

support by buying the books above cost price. Therefore, stocking a bookshop depends largely on the financial means of the bookshop owner. In Cameroon most bookshops are individually owned and located in one town with no branches in other towns. An exception is Presbook, which has branches in some of the major towns in Cameroon.

This writer visited many bookshops in Anglophone Cameroon in January 2003 to examine their holdings in Anglophone Cameroon Literature. The findings leave much to be desired. If the text was on the school syllabus, chances are that it could be found in a bookshop, particularly in September at the beginning of the school year. In Bamenda, the most populated Anglophone town, Commercial Avenue houses many bookshops. Most of them are individually owned and look deserted, apart from some stationery and textbooks. At Oxford Bookshop, which is the representative of Oxford University Press, the shelves were half empty and a lone glass cupboard at the entrance had some Oxford Dictionaries and a few science textbooks published by Oxford University Press. The writer's request for literature texts produced two worn-out copies of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. Adjacent to Oxford bookshop is Universal bookshop, which has since ceased to be a bookshop but still bears the name. It houses a tailoring unit of women sewing traditional dresses. Across the street from Universal bookshop is another imposing looking bookshop. Here the writer's request for Anglophone Cameroon literature resulted in a twenty minute search which produced one copy of *Konglanjo*, a collection of poems published in 1988 by Tanla Kishani.

With the establishment of the University of Buea, in Buea, SouthWest province, many bookshops, mushroomed around the Molyko area where the university is located. Most of these bookshops like Ngassa Bros. Bookshop, sell only textbooks and the few books not on any school syllabus usually have a shelf-life span of about four years according to the bookstore owner. Afosi Bookshop, one of the oldest in Buea, reports only carrying about ten titles of African literature, with none of them by an Anglophone Cameroonian. The proprietor claims that his holdings in this area are small because “they don’t sell when not found in the [school] book list.” Some of the bookshops like Pase in Buea and Cosmopen in Yaoundé claim that they usually carry titles of Anglophone Cameroon literature, particularly when the titles are just published and there is publicity for them on the local radio, but after a few years the stock is depleted. Some of the bookstore owners also claim that, in the case of drama texts, if the play is performed and there is a lot of publicity about it, it generates interest among the public and pushes bookshops to stock the text for curious readers. This was the case with Bate Besong’s *Beast of No Nation* after the Yaoundé University Theater performed it. It follows that most of the bookshop owners do not realize they have to publicize their stock and attract readers. Only Presbook displayed a good number of African literature texts including texts by major Anglophone writers. Presbook Yaoundé carries about twenty titles of Cameroon Anglophone literature. The majority of these, like Butake’s *Lake God*, Tanyi-Tang’s *Ewa and Other plays* are on the secondary school syllabus. However, they also have titles not on the syllabus like *The Last of the Virgins* by

Che Atanga George and Asongwed Tah's *Born to Rule*. Presbook shops, usually more spacious, and well lit, display a good number of imported books published mainly by Macmillan, Heinemann, Evans, Longman etc. One of the series on conspicuous display is the Heinemann Heartbeat series for young readers. The near absence of Anglophone Cameroon literature in bookshops indicates that there is a broken chain in the distribution process.

Libraries also perform an important role in the dissemination. School and university libraries usually stock books beyond the school syllabus in order to enrich the curriculum and engender life-long learning. Libraries also play a role in preserving texts for posterity by archiving important works. In a study carried out by Nwanosike in secondary schools in Anglophone Cameroon, it was revealed that most school libraries are poorly equipped. "There is no collection development policy" and a "school can choose not to have a library at all" (Nwanosike 113). There is therefore an overwhelming neglect of the salient role a school library plays in the support and enrichment of the curriculum. Since the curriculum in most schools is textbook-driven, students and teachers alike see books not in the curriculum as a distraction. Hence school budgets hardly feature library needs. Nevertheless, some writers, school alumni or alumni associations sometimes donate literature texts to schools. For example, during a 1990 celebration of alumni of Sacred Heart College, Cameroon, Butake, an alumnus organized a performance of his play *And Palm Wine Will Flow* by the Yaoundé University Theater. Moved by the performance, a Shesan (alumni of Sacred Heart College), decided to purchase two hundred copies of *And Palm Wine Will*

flow for distribution to some secondary school libraries. It is only through gestures like this that school libraries get works written by indigenous writers; otherwise, the libraries are usually stocked with donated western textbooks from US and European charitable organizations. Mrs. Emeline Fodje, officer in charge of the British Council library in Bamenda, confirms this in her email report:

The British Council has a program to encourage reading especially among primary school children and secondary school students. It is called extensive reading. We give out fiction books to pilot schools and the teachers are trained to encourage the students to read for pleasure. We also have a Book Aid project where by we get books from Book Aid International UK and distribute them to schools to enable them to have school libraries (Email to writer).

The fiction books donated by the British Council are British books in order to spread British culture, which is one of their missions in Cameroon.

The situation in school libraries is not very different for University libraries. The University of Yaoundé library has been a heavily neglected part of the University for a very long time. As the oldest library that could serve as a standard, it has nothing to offer. In a 1991 study of the library conducted by this writer, it was revealed that the library depends on foreign book aid. The chief librarian does not sit on the University Senate Council and is hardly aware of new courses that get introduced. Therefore the library is not updated with new books that reflect the current curriculum. According to the statutes of the university, the library is not considered an integral part of the teaching core. It is an auxiliary department together with the computer center. Students used the library only as a reading room. Basic reference tools such as encyclopedias are not current. A visit to this library in November 2001 and January 2003, reveal that the library

does not have any single text published by an Anglophone Cameroonian although some of the writers like Butake are still actively teaching on campus!

The University of Buea, which is the only Anglophone University in the country, is actually making a difference in librarianship in the country, although it is handicapped by lack of adequate funding. Established in 1993, the library has 36,000 book titles and 3000 journal titles. There is a conscious effort to use the means available to support the curriculum. The library subscribes to Journals like *Epasa Moto* (published by the University of Buea), *Callaloo*, *Research in African Literatures* and *ALA (African Literature Association) Bulletin*. The library has a special collection "Cameroon" covering books on Cameroon written by both Cameroonians and non-Cameroonians. Although they have not made it a principle to purchase every literary work written by an Anglophone writer, they acquire whatever text is requested depending on their budget. So far their titles on Anglophone Cameroon Literature include Lantum's *Folk Tales from Nso*, Bate Besong's *Beast of No Nation* and *Just above Cameroon*, Ngonwikwo's *Taboo Love* and Chesami's *And the People Cried Nkwifor Must Go* (Shafack, e-mail to writer) This list is encouraging, when one compares this to the total absence of Anglophone Cameroon literature in the University of Yaoundé library, which is the oldest university library in the country. Yet it is still far from what is expected of a University library located in Anglophone Cameroon. As Rubin holds, "libraries cannot prosper when the primary energies and resources of the community are devoted to subsistence; they require a certain commitment of wealth and time" (208). However, there is every indication that with a little more

funding, the University of Buea library will accomplish more as a dissemination center for Anglophone Cameroon literature and a veritable center for the dissemination of knowledge.

Academic libraries like public libraries play an important role in disseminating books and nurturing the community with relevant literature. In Cameroon there are hardly any government owned public libraries, which cater directly to Anglophones. Limbe, one of the bustling towns in Anglophone Cameroon, runs a government public library, which is inadequately stocked although students use it as a reading room. Limbe inhabitants are excited about the library and wish it had books relevant to their lives. In Buea there is a privately run small library called Metropolitan. Here students pay 200CFA per visit. Students who, again, use it mainly as a reading room heavily patronize this library. The government had a public library in Bamenda but closed it in 1995 because it lacked both material and staff. In Bamenda, the British Council runs a library in principle with the Bamenda urban council but it is more a British Council library since the British by and large fund the library. According to the officer in charge of the library, Mrs. E. Fodje, there are 1,500 registered members of the library and the library receives 75 people on a daily average who use the library. In terms of what they read she reports:

About 70% of our members are students (Secondary to university) so they are mainly interested in academic books that would enable them to pass exams. More and more they check out books on computing and fiction (Fiction especially during the holidays). The young girls like the fashion magazines like *Vogue*, *She*, *Cosmopolitan* and *Good Housekeeping* while the boys prefer the magazine *Soccer*. The adult members, expatriates like Fiction while Cameroonians like magazines on politics and subject areas of

interest (*Economist*, *Appropriate Technology*, *New Statesman*, *New Scientist*, *Tropical Doctor*, *Africa Confidential*, *Geographical*, *Pharmaceutical Journal*, *Computer Weekly*). Most adults use the library when they have to write a paper or when there is a research need mainly to make money. A few use it routinely to keep up to date with whatever is new in their areas of interest (Email to writer 12 March 2003).

Unfortunately Fodje concludes "We don't have any books by Cameroonian writers [...] our stock is bought from the UK so these writers need to have published with a British Publisher" (Email to writer). Nevertheless, the usage of the British Council library in Bamenda shows that there is a reading population in need of relevant literature. When this writer ran a story series *Namondo's Diary*, on the travails of a married woman, in the *Herald Newspaper* in 1993, many Cameroonians bought the paper weekly to follow the story. This confirms the statistics from the British Council in Bamenda that Cameroonians enjoy reading serials. Thus readers seem to be available but the publishers and writers need to find a way of getting their works to the readers. The British Council library in Yaoundé also caters to a good number of Anglophones. On average the library receives 510 people weekly. The librarian, Mr. Nyenty Andrew reports:

There are several programs at the library to encourage reading especially for children like "Story Time" for children of primary school age. World Book Day is a yearly event that encourages reading and publication [...] There are reading competitions where prizes are given to the best readers during our weekly user's forum (Email to writer).

Again, since the British Council promotes British books, the books used for "Story Time" and other reading events, are British fiction books. Nevertheless, the British Council, Yaoundé has promoted Anglophone Cameroon literature,

particularly Anglophone drama by opening its premises to drama rehearsals and theater performances. On the other hand, the American Cultural center library, which used to act as a public library, now has restricted membership for graduate students and teachers only. However, the cultural center has sponsored some performances of Anglophone Cameroon plays during celebrations like Black History Month. The lack of public libraries is glaring when one compares this with Nigeria that has 92 public libraries, Mexico with 2,269 libraries and Britain with 5,270 libraries (Griswold, 107).

Besides distributing at home, Anglophone publishers and writers need to disseminate their works from Cameroon to the world at large. Recognizing the difficulties indigenous publishers face in disseminating their works out of their home base, non-profit organizations like APNET (African publisher's network) and ABC (African Book Collective) have been created to help indigenous publishers in distribution. APNET was established in 1992. As stated on their Web page,

APNET's mission is the transformation of African Peoples through access to books [...] to strengthen African publishers through networking, training and trade promotion in order to meet Africa's need for quality books relevant to African political, economic and social reality.

Asong, the head of Patron Publishing house is also the vice president of Cameroon Publisher's Association, which is a member of APNET. Asong attends APNET conferences where he exhibits publications from Cameroon particularly from his publishing house, PPH. In addition ABC (African Book Collective) was

established to fill a distribution void in African publishing. Mary Jay, a senior consultant at ABC explains:

Distribution has long been an obstacle for African publishers, and thus for their authors. While the situation varies from country to country within Africa, nonetheless it is broadly true to say that with the exception of parts of South Africa, networks and systems for national and intra-African distribution of books remains non-existent. The major obstacles for publishers are lack of access to capital, poor infrastructure, difficulties in communication, and bureaucratic and exchange problems between countries. Added to this are the lack of purchasing power and the few- and poorly funded libraries. The bookshop well stocked with local publications and undertaking promotions and marketing is an uncommon phenomenon (119).

Consequently, to fill in the distribution void, seventeen founding publishers also established ABC in 1989. ABC aids indigenous publishers by disseminating their work in major English-speaking book markets outside Africa. As a result African writers are encouraged to publish with indigenous publishers without fear that their works will not be widely disseminated. ABC is the exclusive distributor of English-language titles of its member publishers with the exception of textbooks. Unfortunately, no Anglophone Cameroon publisher is yet a member, although Buma Kor Ltd. and Asong's Patron Publishing House express frustration because ABC seems to have frozen its membership. Another growing dissemination outlet for African publishers and writers has been the Zimbabwe International Book Fair (ZIBF). First organized in 1983 and originally under the Ministry of Information, Posts and Telecommunications, the fair is now run by the Zimbabwe International Book Fair Trust, an independent body. According to Margaret Ling one of the organizers:

The ZIBF is part of Africa's response to the globalization of publishing and information production itself [...] we are committed to supporting the development of book reading, a book using and a book buying cultural celebration at the cutting edge of book-related policy development in Africa (qtd. in Larson 97).

In 1998, the Fair witnessed "300 direct exhibitors [...] representing 500 publishers...from 50 countries, 19,645 visitors, including 9,240 trade and professional visitors during trader's days and 10,405 members of the public on the public days" (qtd. in Larson 95). These numbers have continued to increase. Some Cameroon writers like Comfort Ashu have attended the Zimbabwe International Book Fair, and Patron Publishing House has been a book exhibitor during the past two Zimbabwe Book International Fairs. The impact of such a meeting ground for all professionals related to the book trade cannot be overemphasized. For Comfort Ashu the fair gave her the opportunity to publicize her works and also to meet pioneer African women writers like Ama Ata Aidoo for the first time (Conversation with writer). Such meetings create a sense of community and boost literary creativity.

Furthermore, some privately owned organizations have been helping out in distributing African books abroad. One of these is African & Caribbean Imprint Library Services (AILS). Established in 1970, this family-run business distributes African books to readers in the United States. Christopher Boyd, the managing director reports that AILS has acquired 8400 titles from Cameroon since its inception thirty three-years ago. Boyd explains that this is done by "an acquisitions agent there (Cameroon), a person who represents the organization directly". He adds that "Sales are good; though mostly to research libraries which

maintain African studies collections” (Boyd, email to writer). The most recent listings of AILS acquisitions from Cameroon show a strong representation of books from Patron Publishing House indicating that Patron is the leading publisher of Anglophone Cameroon literature today. Although the number of Anglophone Cameroon literary texts in the AILS collection has not been determined, the holdings of United States libraries of Anglophone Cameroon literature (which have been largely supplied by AILS) show that AILS has distributed most of the published literary texts by Anglophone writers.

This writer carried out a search using “World Cat,” (World Catalogue) of the Online Computer libraries catalogue (OCLC) to find Anglophone Cameroon literature carried by libraries in the USA. OCLC has a membership of 43,559 libraries in Eighty-six countries and territories around the world. Over 90% of these libraries are in the US, thus it is an extensive search. The search was done using different keyword searches: “Cameroon and fiction”, “Cameroon and Prose” “Cameroon and drama”, “Cameroon and Poetry”, “Cameroon and Novel”, “Cameroon and Literature”. The search was then limited in each case by language, since the writer needed only works written in English. Since there are some Francophone writers who have published in English or had their works translated in English, this writer used her knowledge of the tribal origins of names in Cameroon to identify Anglophone Cameroon writers. The results of these searches still left out many Anglophone Cameroon writers known to this writer. So an “Author search” of major Anglophone Cameroon writers was carried out. The following table shows the findings. The table, however, does not include

literature specifically written for the textbook market as evident in the title. Bitame Lucia's *Environmental Poems and Nursery Rhymes for Primary School Children* is an example.

Table 4.
Distribution of Anglophone Cameroon literature in U.S Libraries

Author	Book Title	Publisher	Number of Libraries that own item in the USA
Alembong, Nol	<i>The Passing Wind</i> (1991)	Association of West African Young Writers, Lagos.	10
Asheri, Jedida	<i>Promise</i> (1969)	African Universities Press, Lagos, Nigeria	19
Ashu, Comfort	<i>Ayito and Other Stories and Riddles</i> (1992)	Manson Pub. Nigeria	5
Asong Linus	<i>No Way to Die</i> (1993)	Patron Publishers, Cameroon	12
	<i>Laughing Store: a treasure of entertainment.</i> 1993	"	5
	<i>A legend of the dead</i> (1993)	"	5
	<i>Crown of Thorns</i> (1993)	"	7
Besong, Bate	<i>Change Waka & His Man Sawa Boy</i> (2001)	Edition Clé, Cameroon	1
	<i>Beast of No Nation: a docu-drama</i> (1990)	Nooremac Press, Cameroon	2
	<i>Obasinjom Warrior: with poems after detention</i> (1991)	Alfresco, Cameroon	8
	<i>The Grain of Bobe Ngom Jua: poems</i> (1997)	Kola Tree Press, USA.	3
	<i>Polyphemus Detainee and Other skulls</i> (1980)	Scholars Press, Nigeria	13
	<i>Just Above Cameroon: Selected Poems 1980-1994.</i> (1998)	Presbook printing press,	8

		Limbe Cameroon.	
	The Banquet: a historical drama	Markurda, Nigeria	10
Bongasu, Tanla	<i>Konglanjo! Or Spears of Love Without Ill-fortune.</i> 1988	Univ. of Yaoundé, Cameroon	6
Butake, Bole	<i>Thunder on the Mountain: an anthology of modern Cameroon Poetry</i> (1979)	Butake, Cameroon	12
	<i>And Palm-wine Will Flow: drama</i> (1990)	SOPECAM, Cameroon	10
	<i>The Rape of Michelle</i> (1984)	CEPER, Cameroon	8
	<i>Lake God and Other plays</i> (1999)	Edition CLÉ, Cameroon	11
	<i>Betrothal Without Libation: Drama</i> (1981)	Butake, Cameroon	9
Chi, Abel Shu	<i>Our Riddles and Folk Tales</i>	Chi, Cameroon	7
De La Taille, Werner & Tarkang	<i>Balafon</i> (1986)	Longman, England	9
Doh, Emmanuel	<i>Wading the Tide: Poems</i> (1998)	Kola Tree Press, USA.	5
Eyoh, Ndumbe	<i>Munyenge</i> (1990)	BET/Luma Graphics, Cameroon	1
	<i>The Inheritance: A Play</i> (1993)	BET/Luma Graphics, Cameroon	15
Gwangwa'a, Gahlia	<i>Cry of the Destitute: A Collection of Poems</i> (1995)	Nooremac Press, Limbe, Cameroon	12
Kenjo, Jumbam	<i>Lukong and the Leopard, with the White of Cattle</i> (1975)	Heinemann, England	12
	<i>Children's Verse and Stories</i> (1979)	K. Jumbam, Yaoundé, Cameroon	4
	<i>Lynda: A Play</i> (1990)	Ngem publications, Cameroon	7
	<i>The White Man of God</i> (1980)	Heinemann,	224

		England	
Kor, Buma	<i>Searchlight: poems</i> (1975)	Freshman books, Victoria	16
Langha, Kizito	<i>Esther</i> (1993)	Patron Publishers	13
Makuchi	<i>Your Madness, not Mine: Stories of Cameroon</i> (1999)	Ohio University	301
Maimo, Sankie	<i>I Am vindicated, including poems from Twilight-echoes</i> (1970)	Nendeln, Kraus Reprint	28
	<i>Sov-Mbang, the soothsayer, drama</i> (1968)	Edition Clé, Cameroon	43
	<i>The Mask: A One Act Play</i> (1980)	Cowrie publications, Cameroon	11
	<i>Adventuring with Jaja</i> (1976)	Yaoundé? Cameroon	14
Mbaritang, Henry	<i>The Dribblers</i> (1991)	Alpha Computing	5
Muffuh, Benedicta	<i>The Rebel: A Play of Two Acts</i> (1980)	SOPECAM, Cameroon	4
Ngongwikwo, Joseph	<i>Taboo Love</i>	Exposition Press, New York.	14
	<i>The Village Schoolgirl</i> , 1985	Nooremac Press, Cameroon.	15
	<i>The Lost Child</i> (1985)	Nooremac Press, Cameroon	6
	<i>The Taboo kingdom</i> (1980-89?)	Nooremac Press	7
Ngome, Epie	<i>What God Has Put Asunder</i> (1993)	Pitcher Books, Yaoundé	9
Tabe-Ebob, Ayuk	<i>Cameroon: Folk-Verse</i>	Jotan printers, Cameroon	11
Takere, Mesack	<i>Kingfisher Poetry: Man and Nature</i>	CEPER, Yaoundé, Cameroon	3
	<i>The Phoenix</i> (kingfisher Poetry bk.4) 1984	? Yaoundé, Cameroon	1
Tanyi-Tang, Anne	<i>Ewa and Other Plays</i>	Edition Clé, Cameroon.	8

Source: Established from "World Cat" OCLC.

The distribution of Anglophone literature in US libraries shows that libraries in the US acquire most Anglophone literary texts whether they are published indigenously or not. Also, the distribution pattern does not show a bias for any particular genre or particular author. However distribution privileges texts published by well established publishers like Heinemann and Ohio University press. For example *The White Man of God* published by Heinemann is found in 224 libraries and Makuchi's *Your Madness not Mine* is found in 301 libraries. Although these books are in United States libraries, their relatively small quantity shows that they are not heavily taught in schools. As a matter of fact, the ninety-six syllabi received after a survey on the teaching of African literature in the US only show two courses incorporating texts from Anglophone Cameroon on a survey course on African theater. The text in both courses was Bole Butake's *Lake God*. Since the students could not get a copy from the local bookshops in the United States, the professor, with the help of the university, created a copyrighted mimeograph version. Understandably the professor for both courses is an Anglophone Cameroonian. The acquisition of Anglophone Cameroon literary texts by US libraries also confirms that African literature continues to gain grounds in the US with the establishment of African Studies departments and the inclusion of "World Literature" in English departments. However, the presence of these texts abroad and the apparent lack at home confirms the domination of foreign audiences, which has been a constant source of worry for some African critics who feel that this would perpetuate the cycle of African writers gearing

their writing to a foreign audience, thus further distancing African literature from Africans.

Based on the table above with forty-nine texts, the following table shows libraries with a significant number of Anglophone Cameroon Literature texts.

Table 5

Distribution of Anglophone Literature Texts by U.S. Library

United States Library	Number Of Anglophone Literature Texts Owned
Northwestern University Library	38
Harvard, University Library	34
Indiana University Library	34
Library of Congress, Washington DC	32
Columbia Library, New York	24
University of California, Los Angeles	21
Yale University Library	20
University of Iowa Library	20
Stanford University Library	17
University of California, Berkeley	20
University of Florida	18
New York Public Research Library	14
Boston Public Library	9

Source: Established from "World Cat," OCLC

The table confirms that Anglophone Cameroon Literature (African) is mostly read in the US by students, teachers and researchers, although a few public libraries including New York and Boston public libraries own some copies.

Readers

The final destination of books is readers. The ability to read English in Cameroon as in most Anglophone African countries presupposes some formal education in English. Hence a starting point to determine the population of readers is the literacy rate. According to UNICEF 2002 statistics, the literacy rate for Cameroon males is 83% and for women 81%. This is quite high compared to Ghana with 79% for males and 61% for females. Yet these statistics do not give the language of literacy. It is therefore very difficult to get accurate statistics on the number of Cameroonians literate in English. Most studies of English in Anglophone Cameroon concentrate on the social function of the English language and pronunciation. Nonetheless, with some of the statistics available one can come up with a rough idea of the number of potential readers in Anglophone Cameroon. Most studies on Cameroon put Anglophone Cameroon at 20% of the entire Cameroon Population. However instead of basing the math on the general population, this writer based it on the population eighteen years and above. At least a majority of this population must have had a secondary education and can read to some extent.

From UNICEF 2002 statistics, the population of Cameroon above eighteen years is 7,257,000. If Anglophones are 20% of the francophone

population, then 20% of the population above 18 is 1,451,400. The literacy rate for Cameroon is 83% for males and 81% for females. Therefore, without the total men-to-women ratio, one can approximate that about 82% of the population is literate. Again using the 20% mark for Anglophones, 20% of 1,451,400 is 1,190,148, which is roughly about the number of literate Anglophones. This is a rough estimate because although Anglophone Cameroonians are put at 20% of the entire population, the percentage of those eighteen and above may be higher or lower. Nevertheless, the potential to read does not make a reader. Therefore, the number of actual readers would be lower than the number of potential readers. There have been many references to reading in Africa and there is a general consensus amongst critics that it is an area that needs to be properly investigated. One of these critics, Kotei, argues, "In countries where less than 30% of the population can read and write there is need for in depth studies of the sociology of the book and the psychology of reading; on the national level such data should provide guidelines to relevant book production" (148).

On his part Chidi Amuta explains that the writing of literature in Africa preceded a reading culture and by the time a reading culture was being cultivated other information mediums like film and television brought in a distraction. Amuta therefore asserts, "The active readership of the African novel (literature) is therefore to be located among university teachers and their students, professional men (and women) of culture and certificate-conscious teenagers [...] consequently, the African novel (literature) has remained an aspect of a minority urban elite culture" (81).

It therefore follows that a majority of the readers of Anglophone Cameroon literature are secondary, high school and university students and their teachers. For this reason, a close look at the literature curriculum would be instructive as to what Anglophone literature texts students are reading. In 1993, the twenty-nine literature texts recommended for general Secondary education included three titles by Anglophone Cameroonians: Eba's *The Good Foot*, Jumbam's *White Man of God*, and Takere's poetry collection (Tambo Leke 38). Tambo Leke decried this representation as inadequate, not just for literature but also for all the other subjects with the exception of history. His position can be understood: since most students read only what is available in school, the Anglophone Cameroon culture can be effectively passed on through textbooks. Thus Tambo, called on Anglophone writers to also write for the textbook market. (Tambo Leke, 38). Thirteen years after Leke's call, the situation seems to have improved slightly. Out of twenty-nine required texts, there are eight titles written by Anglophone Cameroonians. The list includes Butake's *Lake God and Other plays*, Anne Tanyi Tang's *Ewa and Other plays*, Patrick Mbunwe Samba's *The Poetry Course Book I and Book II*, Jumbam's *The White Man of God* and Linus Asong's *Crown of Thorns*.

In addition, this writer carried out a survey of African literature courses taught at the university to see what place Anglophone Cameroon literature has on the university curriculum. The University of Yaoundé I and the University of Buea were chosen for this survey for two reasons: As the oldest University in Cameroon, the University of Yaoundé I has the oldest English department and

also has a department of African literature, while the University of Buea is the only Anglophone University in Cameroon. The survey came up with a total of sixteen courses of African literature taught in the University of Yaoundé the University of Buea and I. There could be more courses, since the writer did not get feedback from all the African literature teachers at the University of Yaoundé. However this sixteen courses account for over 85% of Anglophone African literature courses taught in universities in Cameroon. From the sixteen syllabi received this writer found out that at least one text by an Anglophone writer is included in survey courses like “Survey of African Literature”, Comparative studies in African Literature” and “The African Novel”. Although there was still a heavy presence of courses wrapped around the first generation of African writers like Achebe, Ngugi and Armah, at the University of Buea there were actually two courses solely on Anglophone Cameroon Literature titled “Cameroon Literature of English Expression” and “Cameroon Literature in English”. This curriculum development is a good boost for Anglophone Cameroon literature and a step in the right direction. From the sixteen university courses sampled, the Anglophone Cameroon authors frequently taught are Bole Butake, Bate Besong and Asong Linus.

Consequently one can argue that today, Anglophone Cameroonian students are reading their own literature more than they did a few years ago, even though what they are reading is largely inadequate. In contrast, the non-student population hardly reads local literature. This writer carried out interviews with 506 Anglophone Cameroonians (with equal distribution in terms of gender)

who admitted to being potential readers. They all had some level of secondary education and above. Asked whether they had read any Anglophone Cameroon fiction within the preceding one year, 59% of them answered “NO” although they had read newspapers, magazines and watched several video films pouring in from neighboring Nigeria including this writer’s *Potent Secrets*, a video film, co-produced with Ako Abunaw. This confirms Kotei’s assertion that there is an adult reading population in Africa, which is neglected. He holds, “whereas the average African literate in an urban area may read a pamphlet, magazine, or newspaper everyday of the week, he may not glance at a book the whole year, except the Bible or the Koran occasionally [...] (“cultural” 180).

In addition 26 % of the sampled group were habitual readers of foreign novels by western writers like Danielle Steel and Stephen King and the majority of these were women. Only 15% of those sampled had read any Anglophone Cameroon literature within the past year and it was either because they knew the writer who had published the book personally or in the case of drama, they got interested in the text after watching the play. Asked why they did not read local literature, 40% of the total participants complained of the economic crisis which has reduced them to subsistence living. Yet 60% claimed that they would like to read Anglophone writers but they find the texts difficult to read. Most of the participants complained that writers, especially poets, couch meaning in difficult words and imagery, but 90% of the participants had watched a performance of an Anglophone play put up by the university theater on stage or on television and had no problem understanding the performances. In fact a lawyer in the group

reported that he has tried in vain to read some Anglophone Cameroon writers, so each time he feels like reading a novel he finds himself re-reading the novels he read in secondary school. He claims with maturity, he discovers other layers of meaning, which he missed in secondary school. Three of these literary texts which he has re-read over six times are Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* and Jumbam's *Lukong and the Leopard with the White man of Cattle*. The fact that after graduating from school, readers cannot connect with new literature seems to point to problems with the teaching and learning of literature in schools. The reason why readers may find difficulty reading a drama text but enjoy a performance can be understood, since the performance makes use of visual theatrical devices, which clarify meaning. However the difficulty of understanding written texts may have to do with the teaching and learning of literature in schools. Kole Omotoso confirms this point when he explains,

African readers when dealing with African literature, approach it as something to be studied, crammed, perused, and waded through. It is not to be come to in the natural process of browsing around to find interesting reading material (257).

Besides the issue of the school curriculum, effective reading entails a quiet environment and adequate lighting. Even those who wanted to read found that their greatest obstacle was noise and social distractions. Houses are always overcrowded with people and there is someone always wanting to talk or dropping by. In Cameroon as in most African countries, "the individual shares in the total cultural heritage of his community to the extent that most situations bring him into contact with the group's pattern of thought, behaviour and action. His

individuality, that is any desire to pursue individualist behaviour, is submerged in communality" (Kotei, "Book" 150).

A similar survey on reading carried out amongst 210 Anglophone Cameroonians living in the USA revealed that while 95% of them say they do not have time to read a book, all of them were interested in owning copies hoping that one day they'll find the time from the "rat race" in America to read. All of those interviewed wanted to know where they can get titles especially for their children, to give them a sense of culture and identity while growing up in the USA. The lack of time was also an obstacle to reading by Nigerians living abroad based on Griswold's study (106).

Nevertheless, although the number of potential readers who are actually reading Anglophone Cameroon literature is low, there is a reading culture contrary to what most Anglophone Cameroonians think. According to Griswold, "a reading culture exists where people are in the habit of reading relatively serious books, and when they choose reading over other forms of entertainment" (Griswold 117). Amongst Anglophone Cameroonians there is a reading culture amongst students, teachers, journalists and men and women of letters. This small urban elite sustains reading in the region while the rest of the population gets instruction and entertainment by participating in oral literature, listening to the radio, watching television and video films. However, Griswold points out, "Books may be costly, but they are a lot cheaper than VCRs, do not require additional equipment, and are more immune to the vagaries of the electric power supply than other media" (118), especially when one takes into consideration the

constant outages of electricity in Cameroon these days. Therefore, reading literature can still compete effectively with other mediums in informing and entertaining the community. Besides, in Anglophone Cameroon, the book remains a powerful medium through which writers and readers share their collective struggles, memories and will to survive the realities of marginal status.

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CHAPTER FOUR

BOOKS IN CONTENT AND CONTEXT: EXPLICATION OF SELECTED ANGLOPHONE CAMEROON LITERARY TEXTS

The Anglophone Cameroon writer at home and in the Diaspora must tell the outside world the story of his tragic land from the point of view of its hostage minority. And such a literature, fellow writers, can only be written by you: Anglophone Cameroon writers, in Anglophone Cameroonian Language and on Anglophone Cameroonian subjects.

(Besong "Literature", 18)

The hallmark of African literature lies in the social role of the African writer. This critical stance has been espoused by several African critics including, Achebe (1975), Soyinka (1976) and Amuta (1986). As the authors of *The Empire Writes Back* explain, "this insistence on the social role of the African artist and the denial of the European preoccupation with individual experience has been one of the most distinctive features in the assertion of a unique African aesthetic" (125). Consequently there is a vital link between African literature and the society that produced it. As a result, a proper understanding of Anglophone Cameroon literature must be predicated on an analysis of its specific socio-historical determinants.

The corpus of Anglophone Cameroon literature today represents two phases. The first phase covers the period from 1959 to the mid-eighties, and the second phase begins from the mid-eighties to the present day. The texts selected here for discussion are representative of Anglophone Cameroon

Literature in terms of subject matter and also in terms of the language used; the texts are written in English with Anglophone Cameroonian coloration.

Furthermore the texts throw light on the dissemination pattern that has characterized Anglophone Cameroon literature to date.

During the first phase, 1959 to the mid-eighties, the master genre was poetry, followed by the short story; yet most of these were published randomly in magazines and newspapers as seen in the last chapter. Consequently the major texts of this period are Maimo's *Sov- Mbang, the Soothsayer*, Jedida Asheri's *Promise*, Kenjo Jumbam's, *The White Man of God*, Ngonwiku's *Taboo Love*, and Nsanda Eba's *The Good Foot*. Asong's novels such as *A Stranger in His Homeland*, *The Crown of Thorns*, and *No Way to Die*, fall in this first phase because, although they were published in the 1990s, they were actually written in the 1970s. The themes treated during this first phase are varied but the dominant theme is tradition versus modernity or the encounter between Africa and the West. Most of the texts in the first phase apart from Asong's and Jedida Asheri's *Promise* have been amply written about in local and international journals. Although *Promise* was published in 1969, and is a classic female bildungsroman that can compare favorably with celebrated novels of this genre, it has never been widely disseminated. It remains largely unknown in and out of Cameroon. There are no copies of the text in Cameroon. On the other hand, *The Crown of Thorns* published in 1990, about fifteen years after it was written entered the secondary school curriculum in 1993, and it is a popular text amongst students

and teachers. However, *The Crown of Thorns* is yet to be disseminated internationally despite its high quality.

In *The Crown of Thorns*, Asong portrays a traditional community, Nkokonoko Small Monje, caught in the cataclysmic wheel of change. The Christian mission has succeeded in dispossessing the people of their land, which they have used to build a Christian church and mission station. Also, the nation state created after the departure of the colonial government has created a western system of administration which puts the District officer (DO) above the chief and elders of the community. The story is set in the late sixties and early seventies in the Anglophone part of Cameroon, which was a British trust and mandate territory. The British believed in a system of indirect rule, hence they ruled the local population through the Native Administration (N.A.) and there was a House of Chiefs. As the narrator explains:

The coming of the missionaries was not the people's worry; nevertheless, they found that fact alone unbearable. The Government too had arrived. Small Monje needed a District Officer to replace the defunct N. A. Office, the administrative body that had governed the tribes for generations. It was merely a more elevated title for the Council of elders" (65)

However, after Anglophone Cameroon gained independence by joining French Cameroon, the new nation state dominated by Francophone Cameroon adopted a system of direct control and Native Administration was not only replaced by a D.O., but the house of Chiefs was dissolved. The territory was divided into administrative units with a government-appointed official responsible for each unit. The chiefdoms now came under government control. Consequently communities found themselves answering to government officials that knew

nothing about their customs and tradition and the officials were often arrogant in dealing with the local population, thereby, leading to a breakdown in communication between the administration and the ruled.

The Crown of Thorns is divided into three parts. The first part opens with the revelation that the god of Nkokonoko, Small Monje has been stolen and sold to a white man. Investigations reveal that the District officer, the representative of government in Small Monje, masterminded the sale with the complicity of a few elders and the Chief. This is the climax of the people's exasperation with the changes affecting their land due to the activities of the priest, the D.O and their own brainwashed Chief. Part two is a flashback to how chief Nchindia reluctantly became chief of Nkokonoko although it was his brother Nkoaleck who had been raised to become the chief. This flashback reveals the machinations of the District Officer, who uses his position to undermine the traditions of the people of Nkokonoko to the extent of forcing a chief on them who has not been trained for the job. The result is a chief who hates his job, does not understand the nature of his office and enjoys flouting the advice and suggestions of his Council of Elders. Finally, part three returns to the crisis at hand: how to respond to the theft of the god of Nkokonoko, Small Monje. It is the response of the people of Nkokonoko, Small Monje, to this tragic dislocation of their community from its spiritual base that forms the central focus of this novel.

To steal a people's god is a grievous crime with grave consequences. As Ngobefuo, the most senior member of the Council of Elders explains "if ever we are to get another god in this tribe, the stump of the god that was left behind by

these wicked brothers of ours, must be watered with blood. If the blood of the sons of Nkokonoko Small Monje shall spill, then the man who led them, the man whose presence has caused the destruction of everything we were once proud of, shall not be spared" (37-38). Consequently the culprits are to be killed, although in the minds of members of the Council of Elders "nobody could tell anymore which was worse-the crime or the punishment" (38). As the Chief and the guilty elders are about to be executed, two officers sent by the D.O. to guard the chief intervene and a fight breaks out. One officer is killed while the other escapes. In the confusion of the fight the chief and three of the guilty culprits are killed but not in the manner prescribed by tradition. The rest of the guilty culprits are then executed according to tradition. The people of Nkokonoko now march on to get the D.O., the chief culprit. He is not at home but his wife is. As she tries to lock them out, Ngangbe, the prime victim of land dispossession, strikes her dead "seized with an evil mania, the wicked frenzy of a man who had on his mind a load of a century's grievances to shake off in one blow [...] (185). The D.O's house is then set on fire, killing his children. The people now continue to the D.O's office at the same time the District Officer is trying to get help from the Governor. Nevertheless, it is too late, for by the time the D.O gets the Governor on the phone, the people of Nkokonoko storm the D.O's office. The D.O. gives command to his remaining officer to shoot the invading crowd. The rest of the action that follows is quick:

Before he [D.O.] even finished giving orders, the man had whipped his revolver from his belt and unleashed the whole round of six cartridges, killing that number of invaders. They pressed on, with every available weapon- spears, cutlasses, pick-axes, stones,

clubs, hatchets and even hoes [...] inflamed by a seething fire of revenge against every conceivable grievance which the D.O now epitomized, they fell on him, even wounding themselves, as every single person tried to use his weapon on the villain before he died. And even after he had died, those like Ngangbe who came too late still managed to find some unpierced spot under him for their own machetes (193).

According to the tradition of Nkokonoko the land is cleansed but in the new dispensation, which gives the government supreme authority over Nkokonoko, the leaders of the Council of elders know "it is a question of time" before the Governor's troops invade Small Monje to avenge the death of the D.O. This is a tragic story, but it is neither the tragedy of the Chief nor that of the D.O. It is the tragedy of a people caught in a net spawned tight by colonialism and made even tighter by those who take over from the colonial government.

Asong's style is lucid. The dialogue exudes a certain freshness buttressed by the use of metaphors and proverbs. Asong uses the "Queens English" steeped in an Anglophone Cameroonian flavor. In discussing the activities of the Chief, which are not in line with the tradition of the people, the elders explain the situation metaphorically:

Their chief was their house. Their house ought to remain clean always. If a house gets dirty, they clean it. If it gets so infested with vermin that no amount of cleaning will make it fit for human habitation, what do they do? They burn it down and build another one. They had good reason for burning down this particular house [...] they had thought that the excrement in the house was smelling and it had reached a point where they could no longer endure (117).

Asong's dialogue blends in with his sharp characterization and plot, which shows that Asong is at ease in his literary imagination. Bjornson confirms this

view, "There is a certain assured confidence in Asong's handling of plot and characterization that usually goes with maturity and experience. We are not surprised by events and their outcome, we are carefully prepared and everything moves towards an almost inevitable climax of horror "(Unpublished review).

Another representative text of the first phase is *Promise*. This first novel by an Anglophone Cameroon woman has been neglected in criticism, although it is always mentioned in historical accounts of Anglophone Cameroon literature.

Promise is an autobiography. In the preface to the story, some one with the initials "SA" which match the names of the illustrator of the story, Shirley Ardener, claims that this is a real story but the writer never intended to publish it. Therefore, only the names of the characters have been changed. The story is set in the 1930s and 40s in the Bansaw area of the grass-field regions in British Southern Cameroons.

In *Promise* Jedida Asheri covers the period of her life from seven years till when she is in her early twenties. The stories of her childhood are many and deal with several conflicting problems, but generally the stories detail a series of losses. Like the young female protagonists in Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John* and Zee Edgell's *Beka Lamb*, Jedida's growth is marked by Christianity and colonialism. As a result she loses her indigenous culture. The story also marks her loss of childhood. The first loss is evident when Jedida visits her aunt in Ropka. Commenting on their water supply, Jedida explains that:

The water supply at the village was very bad. Water was taken from a small, very muddy and dirty pond. It was so dirty that a queer smell surrounded it [...] the people themselves were dirty, and had

no idea of civilization. Nature is very kind to people who are ignorant" (34)

Because of Jedida's western education, her perception of her indigenous environment is changing. She finds the people in Ropka "uncivilized" as opposed to Kimbaw where she lives because Rokpa does not yet show visible signs of western influence. Due to her western education, she is undergoing psychic amputation from her cultural and physical background. Again, in comparing girls in her school, she explains, "The girls in our school who came from Bamenda were more civilized than we were. We were attracted and made friends with them. [...] They also spoke 'pidgin English' a language we did not know. We learnt this kind of English." (55). Consequently being "civilized" means giving up one's own indigenous language. This whole question of language becomes a crucial point when Jedida and her friend Alice are asked to teach after finishing standard four. They find themselves incapable of communicating with girls with whom they share the same language, Lamsaw. As Jedida explains, "we had very difficult times teaching [...] we knew little English and could not write Lamsaw". Their western education, which only sanctions written languages, cuts them off from Lamsaw and because they lack a good knowledge of English, communication breaks down in the classroom between people who hitherto could communicate fluently.

Furthermore, using the Christian adage "spare the rod and spoil the child", Jedida's mother constantly beats her, which creates a wedge between mother and daughter. As she puts it:

The Reverend Fathers had taught that it was very wrong to spare the rod, no matter how trivial the offence committed by the child. If parents did not punish their children sufficiently, the wrath of God would be so great that God might decide to take away the child. Heaven knows what I suffered at Mamma's hands on account of this (11)

Jedida's mother is overburdened with house chores and farm work and it leads her to place an excessive burden on Jedida to lighten her workload. Therefore, there's always an opportunity for a beating. It is only when Jedida grows into womanhood that mother and daughter build a bridge towards each other in the recognition of their mutual love.

In addition, Jedida loses her childhood. This comes at the age of twelve. As she explains, "I was twelve years old. I began to pay attention to cleanliness of my feet. Before now, I was not particular about myself. I don't know what I considered myself to be. I just existed. Now I began to be conscious. I washed my khaki frock every Saturday. In the evenings I saw to it that it was clean before going to evening prayers. I even tried to comb my hair (38). Jedida's coming of age is not only signaled by her personal cleanliness, it is marked by an assertive character. Jedida is no longer afraid of the Reverend fathers or her own Father as she used to be. This manifests itself on two occasions. First she challenges her father for neglecting her siblings who are clothed in rags. She gives all her earnings to her father and as she claims, "nobody knew what he did with it" (21). Because of her intervention, her father buys a singlet for her brother. Jedida also begins to challenge Missionary authority; she refuses to go for night mass because the church is very far and the weather is cold. When she was younger,

she usually trekked miles to go to mass because “no one had told (her) that it was not necessary to make journeys of more than three miles just to go to prayers” (36). As an older girl now she makes the decision not to go. As she argues “I felt no fear when he [The Reverend Father] came. I was determined to tell him that I would not go to church in the night” (45). Surprisingly, the Reverend Father sides with her and she is allowed not to go.

Nevertheless, to Jedida’s mother her maturity has to be confirmed by traditional Bansaw standards. Hence her mother gives her a hoe and her own plot for farming. She works on her farm as “she had seen mamma do” until the planting is done. The stamp of approval comes from women in the community who stopped to watch as Jedida worked, “At first, they just stood and talked to themselves, quite audibly though. They said I had acquired my mother’s skill in farming. They called me Asheri and congratulated me in a very emotional manner. They urged me to carry on in the same way” (68-69). At this point the relationship between Jedida and her mother changes. It is at this time that Jedida takes a look at her mother and realized that “ she [Mamma] was very tired and full of care” (91). On her part, “Mamma seemed to realize that I [Jedida] was now a big girl. She did not check on me when I came home in the evening. Of course, I went to the farm with her everyday, but when I came back, I washed the dust from my face and feet, and went to see my friends, mostly in the compound” (95). Jedida’s story ends as she leaves for a teacher’s college in Nigeria. It is no coincidence that the telegraph asking her to leave for Nigeria comes in her father’s absence. As a child she identified with her father because he did not beat

her, since his job as a catechist always took him away from home; but as a grown-up woman Jedida notices that her mother has actually been working too hard to take care of her and her siblings. Jedida's story is told in very descriptive language. Arnold acknowledges that Jedida Asheri "has written a lyrical autobiography with a nice turn of pen" (508).

The second phase of Anglophone Cameroon Literature begins from the mid-eighties to the present. The literature of this period is an imaginative response to the political, social and economic climate during this time. The economic crisis, which hit Africa in the mid-eighties, resulted in salary cuts in Cameroon. The bleak economic situation highlighted global political developments towards liberalization and regime changes. Furthermore, the end of the cold war and the move towards more democratic governments in the former communist nations of Eastern Europe served as a springboard for Cameroonians to ask for reforms. The mood during this period is one of disillusionment, unrest, and a clamor for the government to be people-centered. This mood, as seen in chapter two, led to marginalized groups like Anglophones asking for more representation. Anglophone Cameroon writers, particularly dramatists, responded imaginatively to the activities around them. Cameroon Anglophone literature of this period for the most part, is a protest against what Doh calls "horizontal colonialism". This protest is directed to the Francophone leaders who have marginalized Anglophones due to their minority status and to Anglophone leaders who have forgotten their origins and joined the Francophones in subjecting their own kind to second-class citizenship. Some of

these works include Butake's *And Palm Wine Will Flow*, and *Dance of the Vampires*, Bate Besong's *Beast of No Nation* and Victor Epie Ngome's *What God Has Put Asunder*. During this protest period, the drama genre that was the last to bloom became dominant. As Besong explains:

With the wave of democracy that preceded multi-party politics in Cameroon, Anglophone dramatists found themselves face to face with theater audience of thousands seeking answers to political questions (14)

Therefore, because drama can instruct the masses quickly and is accessible in terms of dissemination through performance, it has become "the genre" during this crisis period. The plays under discussion have been widely disseminated in Cameroon through repeated performances. These plays were very influential in shaping public opinion in the early nineties when the Anglophones' demand for their sovereign rights took center stage. In addition, Butake's *Lake God and Other Plays*, which includes *And Palm Wine Will Flow*, is a required text for form three students in Cameroon.

And Palm Wine Will Flow combines western theatrical idioms and different modes of Oral literature, like masks, incantation, and proverbs from Butake's Noni tradition to create his dramatic vision. The natural and supernatural live in one continuum of reality. As Bate Besong contends, "without coming to terms with Butake's syncretic imagination using traditional Noni mythic pattern in an otherwise realistic mode, and how it influences his art, it is impossible to apprehend his potential as an Anglophone Cameroon artist" (7).

And Palm Wine Will Flow is set in the Fondom of Ewawa. The Fondom is in the grips of a Fon and his council of elders who revel in corruption and alcoholism. Their activities have alienated Shey Ngong, the spiritual leader of the Fondom. The play, written in one Act begins, and ends at the grove of Shey Ngong, where he performs rituals on behalf of the people of Ewawa. The play opens with Shey Ngong performing an incantation, but he is interrupted by a voice, which tells him that everyone in the village is heading towards the palace to witness Kibanya's red feather ceremony and as usual there will be a big celebration afterwards, and palm wine will flow. The Fon has abused the traditional feather reserved for heroes of the clan by giving it to the highest bidder. Shey Ngong is exasperated with the corruption, drunkenness, and greed that has pervaded the people, so he refuses to join what he sees as the madness of the Fon. He tells the voice "my obligation is to the gods of the land. My duty is to the gods. Not the Fon and the palm wine [...] the gorilla can do nothing to the Iroko tree" (10). Exasperated by Shey's refusal to join the celebration, the Fon seizes farms from Shey's wives and gives them to Kibayana's wives. As one of the Fon's messengers comes to announce the Fon's pronouncement to Shey, the Earth Goddess's mask in the grove is animated and pronounces the coming of a draught, "the sun shines on hills/ the sun shines in the valleys/the sun shines in the depths of the streams/ the sun shines." (20) Shey asks the messenger to take Earth Goddess' message back to the Fon.

Events reach a climax in Ewawa when the Fon's watchdogs beat Nsangong, a respectable elder of the Fondom, because he is Shey's friend. The

people abandon their usual drinking spree at the Fon's palace in protest over this beating. To cleanse the land from these excesses, the Kibaranko, goes on a cleansing mission to rid the land of all evil forces, including the Fon. He unleashes destruction as he heads for the palace but by the time he gets there the Fon is dragged into a room and the Kibaranko splits the Fon's throne in two, a symbol of the annihilation of the Fon. The Earth goddess finally curses the Fon to death. The people now vow that they don't want a Fon anymore; power should not be in the hands of one man. It should be given to a council of elders. However all the people are summoned to the market place to discuss the best way the country could be run.

Butake broadens the scope of his characters by exploiting spirit possession. According to Firth, "Sprit possession is a form of trance in which the actions of a person are interpreted as evidence of control of his behaviour by a spirit normally external to him" (qtd. in Alembong 130). Consequently Kwengong is both the Earth goddess and Shey's first wife. The Tapper also doubles up as Kibarankor. Butake also makes use of proverbs in establishing conflict in the play. For example, the following set of proverbs pit the Fon against the Shey:

The cockroach does not call a fowl to a wrestling match (10).
 The gorilla can do nothing to the iroko tree (10).
 The stream never flows uphill. The leopard and the goat
 have never been bed fellows (14).
 The rat does not play with the cat (18).

Shey Ngong's refusal to be part of the Fon's debauchery has put him in open conflict with the Fon. Shey is expected to lose in this conflict. He is the cockroach who cannot defeat the fowl (the Fon) in a wrestling match. However,

Shey is the spiritual leader of Ewawa, the chief priest of Nyombom, hence he has moral purity over the Fon. With this spiritual superiority, he rightly claims to be the iroko tree, the leopard and the cat. Shey is vindicated because at the end the Fon loses his throne and his life.

In *And Palm Wine Will Flow* Butake predicts the wishes of Cameroonians. By the time the play was published in 1990, there was a clamor for a national conference symbolically presented in Butake's play as a meeting in the market place. Butake predicts victory for the people in a liberation struggle against a government that has lost touch with the aspirations of the governed.

In *Dance of the Vampires*, Butake continues his presentation of a destitute Fon. This time the Fon has become his own prisoner and is held hostage by the military whom he pays exorbitantly to keep them from revolting. The nuances in the name of the monarch, Psaul Roi, cannot be missed. If one takes out the "s", it becomes Paul and if you take out the P it becomes Saul and in the Bible Saul was Christened Paul. The French last name "Roi" makes it easy to see this monarch as Cameroon's own President Paul Biya.

The play is set in an urban center, the capital city of a fictitious country with a vampire cult. There is total repression of any ideas by Psaul Roi, the Monarch. Despite his power, Psaul Roi cannot destitute his Town Crier Chambiay because Chambiay is the Chief Vampire of the vampire cult to which Psaul Roi is only a co-opted member. As a ruling monarch, Psaul Roi cannot be an initiated member because he would automatically become the Chief Vampire and that would undermine the power of the other vampires. Furthermore, the

initiation of a monarch to the vampire cult entails a huge sacrifice from the kingdom in terms of earthquakes, human blood and fires. Nevertheless Psaul Roi insists on being an initiated member. He wants absolute power. He succeeds in getting initiated by bribing Song, one of the members of the vampire cult. As a result of this initiation, the people in this country start experiencing disasters. There is an earthquake in a mountainous region of the country in which 2000 people die and a big Market located in another part of the country is consumed by fire. The monarch capitalizes on the misery of his people by asking for foreign aid for himself and by requesting the goods saved from the market to be taken to his palace. The result is a clash between the military and the people. Several citizens die and the rest evacuate the country. Again the main themes here are greed, lust for power and abuse of power.

Dance of the Vampires ends like *And Palm Wine Will Flow*: the monarch loses his throne, and is captured along with his closest collaborator, but this time they are taken to the market place where they will be “exposed to the wrath and glowing vengeance of the people they were supposed to serve. They will spend the rest of their days counting their guilt on the faces of their victims; and so measure the consequences of the macabre dance of the vampires” (173). The market thus becomes for Butake a symbol of people power, a sort of people parliament where everyone is represented and there is no discrimination. The people have a right to decide their own fate. The destiny of the country should not be placed in the absolute control of one man; power has to be shared and the market place of ideas must be brought to bear on how the people are governed.

Furthermore, Bate Besong's *Beast of No Nation*, also published in 1990, is set in Ednuoay, which is Yaoundé, the capital city of Cameroon spelled backwards. However, in Besong's play Ednuouay becomes a nation echoing President Paul Biya's often quoted phrase of the 90s "quand Yaoundé respire, le Cameroun vit".⁵ Yaoundé is not only the capital of Cameroon it is also the president's native stronghold. Besong reduces Ednuoay to a nation of excrement and Anglophones are "nightsoil -men", carriers of "Shit". The stage is reduced to a pile of excrement and the nightsoil-men are permanently "singing to the sound and rhythm of buckets of excrement being loaded and off loaded to trucks waiting off stage" (41). Like Armah in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Bate Besong uses excrement and filth as a metaphor for corruption. Lyonga reveals that Besong's images of filth "constitute his views of Cameroon, as a country in a state of advanced degeneracy instead of the officially declared 'advanced democracy'" (162)

Besong blames the degeneration of Ednuoay to the ruling "frogs"⁶ that adhere to a secret cult of "greed, grab, and graft". They are "thieves of no nation" who form "a brainless and sensuous class, who someday will take the Ednuoay nation hostage as a result of their inexhaustible greed" (41). The only saving grace in Besong's portrayal of Ednuoay is the "narrator," who is called "professor" by the nightsoil-men. He is a self-styled warrior for liberty and freedom, who seems to be the mouthpiece of the playwright. The narrator provokes the

⁵ When Yaounde breathes, Cameroon is alive. This statement was made when the civil disobedience in Cameroon in 1992 brought activities in all major cities to a halt except Yaounde. The President was insinuating that the "operation ghost towns" as they were called, had not crippled the nation, since Yaounde was not affected.

⁶ This is a derogatory name used for "Francophones" in response to their use of the word "Anglos" as an insult to Anglophones.

nightsoil-men into thinking. He declares "O most venerable Anglo...my co-workers in the field of shitology don't have their independence and freedom. It appears that you'll soon have to decide to fight or run. A hero goes to war to die" (39). The narrator repeats the phrase "a hero goes to war to die" several times in the play. Therefore Besong does not disguise his message or intention in this play. It is a call for Anglophones to wake up and smell the stench of the "excrement" around them and take the necessary measures to liberate themselves even if they die in the process. When this play was staged in Yaounde in March 1991, the playwright was arrested and charged with subversion (Besong Telephone interview). Besong is very Soyinkean in his style. Critics like Eyoh believe his "linguistic inflations can make reading difficult, yet on stage, the images are very telling" (105) For Besong his medium is his message. The language of his plays captures his frustration with the question of Anglophone marginalization.

Another memorable play of this period is Victor Epie Ngome's *What God Has Put Asunder*. This is a historical allegory on the "marriage" between Francophone Cameroon, represented by the Moslem Garba and West Cameroon represented by Weka. The play revolves around Weka, an orphan raised by Rev. Gordon and Sister Sabeth (Britain) and Garba, brought up by Louis (France). Weka has two suitors vying for her hand in marriage, Emeka (Nigeria) and Garba (East Cameroon). Weka reluctantly accepts Garba as the lesser of two evils. Because of Weka's reluctance in accepting Garba and Garba's objections to certain portions of the marriage vow, Rev. Unor (United

Nations) solemnizes the marriage probationally. In this case the couple is given time to get to know each other. However, the marriage with Garba proves disastrous. Weka protests to Garba for treating her as a “concubine” and her children as “bastards” in spite of the amount of wealth that her marriage brought to him. As she points out “ By marrying me...if one can call this marriage you became Lord and master over the cocoa farms my father left me” (31). Moreover Weka and her children are forced to speak Garba’s language (French) instead of their own (English). Weka becomes disillusioned and decides to abandon Garba. As a result Weka and her children return to her home (West Cameroon). Their focus is “to build this place back to a respectable home” (3). When Gordon learns of Weka’s fate, he feels guilty for abandoning Weka. He should have “maintained a certain presence. Maybe not exactly like Louis but at least a dissuasive present...to deter him [Garba] from his excesses” (39).

Nevertheless, Garba tries to force Weka to return with him, but he is rough handled and forced out of Weka’s home by Weka’s children with the sympathy of Rev. Gordon and Jim Rican [America]. Garba resorts to the law courts but he is informed that the marriage with Weka was not a real marriage. First, Weka was coerced into the marriage. Next, Garba had signed a monogamous marriage but he practiced polygamy, and lastly he had forced Weka and her children to learn his own language and abide by the customs of his land. Therefore the terms of the marriage as stipulated on marriage number 001/UN of Feb. 11, 1961, which allowed the couple to live in physical separation in a “simulated wedlock”, are upheld. The marriage registration number is actually the plebiscite date when

West Cameroon gained independence by joining La République du Cameroun in a federation.

Therefore Epie Ngome is proposing a return to federation instead of the present unitary state. His argument is that the unitary state is not only illegal, Francophones and Anglophones represented by Weka and Garba are incompatible, hence his title "*What God Has Put Asunder*". The title plays on the biblical adage "what God has put together let no man put asunder". Although this is a historical allegory, Epie Ngome uses his creative genius to create realistic characters and situations that are engaging in their own right. Epie Ngome's language is captivating, full of wit and humor. As a result Ambanasom contends that Epie Ngome's language in *What God Has Put Asunder*, "consists of natural, spontaneous[...] exchanges that are a joy to listen to time and time again [...] His (Epie-Ngome) dialogues thus have a conversational value, the work of a stylist and a brilliant conversationalist versed in the art of talking, a dramatic attribute of great value. For it has the advantage of holding and sustaining the interest of both readers and audiences (51).

Amongst Anglophones, the popularity of this play was enormous when it was staged in the mid-nineties in different towns in Cameroon. The audience recognized the characters and cheered the final judgment of the court. As Eyoh points out, many of these playwrights (Butake, Epie Ngome, Besong),

See themselves in a role of developing the critical consciousness of their society, of mobilizing people for change through the destruction of the 'culture of silence', which has so far subjected them to years of oppression. Their role seems to be that of building the foundation of a new society in which social justice and a sense of communal belonging can prevail (10).

While the Anglophone male writer is concerned with the plight of Anglophones in Cameroon, the women writers deal with their double marginalization as Anglophones and women. The 1985 Beijing conference on women greatly publicized the marginal status of women the world over. In Cameroon, this translated into women pressure groups like the Association of Female Journalists and the Association of Female Jurists. This period also witnessed the proliferation of non-profit organizations determined to fill the gaps left by the government in catering to marginalized groups like women and children. In addition, women-centered programs in English like “women and development” anchored by Anne Nsang on Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV) network became revolutionary in publicly discussing women’s issues, which were considered private. The program took this pattern: one or two women presented personal testimonies depending on the topic of the day, which included widowhood, divorce, polygamy, and problems of the girl-child. Then a panel of experts including a legal expert explained to the in-house and television audience the legal options open to women in the stated situation and where they could seek help. This was the first time women’s issues were getting center stage in public and it gave women the confidence to speak out. Consequently, for the first time women appeared on television acknowledging various forms of abuse justified by tradition or sanctioned by the constitution. Furthermore, a Ministry of Women’s Affairs was established in Cameroon. With the creation of the Ministry of Women’s affairs, the International Women’s Day, March 8th, became a day of manifesting “women’s power” and solidarity. On this day,

women all wear a uniform designed by the Ministry of Women Affairs and there is a parade in all major towns. On Women's Day in Cameroon, women take the country hostage. They can be spotted with their uniform in every corner of the city celebrating their freedom of being. On this day, there is usually a special edition of "Women and Development" which ends with a big party. These events of the day are later shown on TV energizing the women. Thus from the rural to urban woman, the slogan "gender equality" has become commonplace in Cameroon. To crown it all a Women's Studies department was created in the University of Buea, the only Anglophone University in Cameroon. Here, Nalova Lyonga edits a magazine of creative writing about women entitled *That Rocky Place*. Some entries in volume two of *That Rocky Place* like Asheri Kilo's "*The divorce*" were first performed as part of activities marking the International Women's Day.

It is in this social environment that Anne Tanyi -Tang published *Ewa and Other Plays* in 2000. There are four plays in this collection including *Ewa*. *Ewa* brings to the fore problems facing the girl-child, some of which are lack of education and early marriage. The play also centers on Ewa's mother, who has been severely abused by her late husband and ends up projecting this abuse onto her daughter, Ewa. Ewa is the oldest child to her mother, but her mother continuously abuses her both verbally and physically. Ewa is starved, not clothed, beaten, and her mother even throws pepper on her body. Ewa's mother, Nyango, explains the source of her actions in this angry speech directed at Ewa:

He [Ewa's father] abandoned me throughout the pregnancy and went out for a merrymaking trip with my mate [Co-wife] when I was

in labour. I almost died in childbirth [...] In order to win back his love, I had to send you home to my mother. I hate you (9).

Therefore, Nyango herself is a victim of abuse and therefore psychologically unfit to raise her daughter, who she has in turn victimized. Although Ewa brilliantly graduates from primary school, Nyango refuses to send her to secondary school. She is subjected to an early marriage at 13 to Ajoh, who continues the cycle of abuse. Fortunately, a concerned social worker intervenes and Ewa gets 30,000CFA to start a small business. She uses part of this money to go to one of her aunts who welcomes her. The other part of the money is used to establish a restaurant where she sells food by day and by night she attends evening classes in preparation for the GCE "O" Level. Once she succeeds with the "O" Level, Ewa continues to prepare for the GCE "A" Level. The play ends when Ewa's name is called on radio amongst the successful candidates. Education is therefore seen by Tanyi-Tang as one way of improving the marginal status of women. The play also claims a girl's right to education in place of an early marriage. *Ewa and Other Plays* is in the secondary school syllabus as required reading for form two students. In addition, *Ewa* has been performed several times in different towns in Cameroon; therefore, *Ewa* is a widely disseminated in Cameroon.

Makuchi's *Your Madness, Not Mine*, a collection of short stories, is published by Ohio University Press. Three hundred and one libraries in the United States own this text. Consequently it has the potential to be read in the United States especially in the university. However, *Your Madness, Not Mine*

remains virtually unknown in Cameroon and is not yet in any of the Cameroon bookshops this writer visited. The Themes in *Your Madness, Not Mine* are wide ranging, from the fragile relationships between Francophones and Anglophones through the problems brought about by western timber exploiters to women's social and domestic problems. Nonetheless, whatever her theme, her central characters are women who are strong and ready to battle for survival. As Eloise Brière confirms "The characters Makuchi creates are survivors; they are scrappy and they are strong, especially the women [...] Makuchi uproots her people from silence and transplants them into new soil, staking out new possibilities for growth, for expression (xiv).

The first story, "The Healer" deals with the theme of infertility." Infertility is a recurrent theme in African literature by women, since in most African societies the value of a woman lies in her ability to become a mother. Although science has proven the contrary, in the event that a couple is childless, the spotlight of blame is always on the woman and not on the man because she is the one who is supposed to physically carry the pregnancy. In "The Healer" The narrator tells the story of her aunt who is in a childless marriage. The aunt is a very vivacious and cheerful personality but the cheerfulness "was marred by something, something that lay hidden somewhere behind her eyeballs" (Healers, 6). To no avail, the narrator's aunt visits every native doctor she can reach to make her fertile. Her brother now determines to send her to the legendary Azembe, a native healer renowned for his effectiveness in curing infertility. In fact Azembe

had made fertile the wives of a policeman who were having difficulties conceiving; as the narrator reports,

They both [wives of the Policeman] had children, one boy, and one girl. But something curious, something devious, revealed itself as the two children got older. When they stared into each other's face, they seemed to reflect the same image, the same eyes staring into the same square face. The family had pretended to overlook the resemblance when the babies were younger, telling every visitor "Ooooooh, oooh! They look so much like their father." The visitors would believe them if they did not know the policeman[...] those visitors who knew the truth especially the women, admired the children, praised them, commented on how healthy they looked and reserved their laughter and mockery when they were out of sight and earshot ("The Healer" 9).

Despite this, the narrator's aunt is taken to Azembe by her brother. The medicines Azembe give her make her drowsy. One day as she recovers from her drugged sleep she notices semen on her underwear. Since only Azembe enters her room, she imagines what has happened. She then sets out to trap Azembe, so the next time Azembe gives her medication she does not drink it but throws it under her bed. When Azembe later enters her room she pretends to be asleep and Azembe goes ahead to disrobe her. As the aunt reveals, "At that precise moment...something had snapped in her head, invading her arteries, spreading through her entire body and she seemed possessed [...]" ("The Healer" 10). She goes on a rampage to kill Azembe. She sets ablaze the healer's complex of patient huts. Azembe is finally taken to court and is given a three year-sentence, which he does not complete because he dies of a heart attack in jail. This story systematically reveals that some of the problems of infertility amongst couples originate with men. If Azembe can make the women pregnant it means there is

nothing wrong with them and the problem lies with their husbands. However, in Cameroon like most African societies, infertility is mostly associated with women and they are the only ones who go in search of treatment. Charlatan healers like Azembe have understood the truth and capitalize on it to feed their greed and lust.

In "Market Scene," another story in *Your Madness, Not Mine*, Makuchi delves into bonding amongst women especially in the market place where they have the opportunity to spend long hours "in the business of survival." The market scene is set in Yaounde, the capital of Cameroon. The women in the Central Market have come from different parts of Cameroon and bonded in the market place by facing the same challenges, though their different languages mark and identify them. Those from Anglophone Cameroon speak in Pidgin English and some broken French, while the Francophones speak a mixture of pidgin and broken French. As Briere comments "the linguistic mix spoken by Cameroonians in the capital is indeed the language of survival, the language of depopulation[...] monolingualism is a luxury few can afford in a world where survival requires more than one language" (xvii). The daily occurrences in the market are like a theater ritual punctuating normal life with glimpses of the diabolic nature of men. On this day a husband seeks revenge by cutting a young man with a knife because the young man dupes his wife into buying a worn-out pair of jeans instead of a brand new one. This incident reminds Sibora, one of the market women, of how she has been abandoned by her husband. As she puts it "Well this woman is lucky. At least she had someone to come and fight for

her...You all know how I've been struggling and suffering with my children since that man, that devil, that wicked...well he's not even a man...since he left and shackled up with that pute, that, that, ...bordel [prostitute]..." ("Market Scene" 35). Sibora is overwhelmed with single parenthood. Her sixteen-year-old daughter is not only pregnant, she herself is sick and a trip to the doctor lands her prescriptions for drugs worth 17,000CFA. Her plea to the doctor that she is financially overburdened cannot change the situation. As Sibora recounts her story to her fellow market women, she is overwhelmed and collapses. Her co-market women do not know whether she is joking or she has died for real. As one of the market women says of Sibora, "Other people's troubles always raised the lid of the basket of problems that she had logged within her heart all these years" ("Market Scene" 35). Women as a group are a marginalized lot; therefore, when faced with problems of womanhood, women in Cameroon become one; there is no Anglophone or Francophone. Makuchi creates women going through the same hardships. They had left their distant villages and towns grudgingly following their husbands to a strange city to eke out a living. In their quest for survival they find friendship, a friendship that helps them to put up a good fight against the economic depression that has devalued the currency and their existence.

Furthermore, in Makuchi's "Accident's Are a Sideshow" the central theme is the second-class citizenship of Anglophones in Cameroon. A roadside accident between a car driven by an Anglophone woman, Manda and a taxi driven by a Francophone man quickly degenerates into issues of identity in the

nation state, Cameroon. The Francophone driver angrily tells Manda that driving is a privilege that has been given to women but women are yet to master the craft. Manda is just from another fruitless visa interview at the American Embassy. Her request to join her husband had been refused again. In her frustration, she keeps quiet, but when her friend in the front seat, Manoji responds to the taxi driver in English, the floodgates open. The Francophone Driver leaves Manda's womanhood and attacks her "Anglophoneness". On hearing English, he responds "Ah no be tok [Did I not say it]...Ce sont les Anglo [They are Anglophones]" ("Accidents are a Sideshow" 108). The quarrel soon degenerates as Manoji also abuses the driver by calling him a "Frog", The Francophone goes on to abuse Manoji in French:

Imbecil. Regard moi ca. Il fallait qu'on vous laisse avec Nigeria, ces anglos. On a pitie de vous a accepte dans notre pays et au lieu de rester tranquille vous venez nous cassez de pied pou rien.(109)

Idiot, Look at you. We should have left you "anglos" in Nigeria. We took pity on you and accepted you amongst us instead of being grateful, you are here causing us pain.

These words capture the way Francophones perceive Anglophones as second-class citizens. Anglophones are not supposed to have a voice in Cameroon. Recognizing the link of Anglophone Cameroon to Nigeria during the colonial days, Francophones refer to Anglophones provocatively as Nigerians who were saved by French Cameroon from the excesses of Nigeria. This quarrel exemplifies the fragile relationship between Anglophones and Francophones. The least provocation leads to insults on the line of "Anglos" and "Frogs". Makuchi's characters display the language interplay in Cameroon. As Eloise

Brière notes “Makuchi is one of the first African writers to not only allow us to hear the rich linguistic mosaic that characterizes modern Africa, but to show us how language, class, and power intersect in the postcolonial context” (xviii). Makuchi’s “Accidents Are a Sideshow” successfully depicts Anglophone women as double victims, first as women then as Anglophones.

Nevertheless, some critics believe that in order to establish an Anglophone literary tradition, Anglophone Cameroon literature must move beyond what they see as a literature of disillusionment and victimization. As Lyonga contends, “the chronotype of nearly all existing Anglophone protest works multiplies the symbols of victimization, but this cannot be the force of the Anglophone literary tradition. Anglophone Cameroon literature has to move from deconstruction to a re-construction of a heritage that Anglophones are stringently clinging to in this pluralist era of Cameroon’s democratization” (102). However, Becker rejects this view by stating, “as every society needs a literature of support to help it identify itself as a coherent culture, so every society needs a prophetic literature to rage against its injustices and its failures to live up to the ideals it proclaims to the world” (259).

Consequently Anglophone Cameroon literature is in process. It is a literature in the making since the people it represents are still in the process of defining themselves as they continue to determine their status within the nation state, the Republic of Cameroon.

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CONCLUSIONS

The impact of Colonialism resulting in the formation of nation states in Africa has resulted in postcolonialism as a permanent site for resistance and reconstruction. The position of Anglophone Cameroon within the nation state “Republic of Cameroon” is unique. As Bate Besong explains, it is an irony “of the Cameroon situation that the British Southern Cameroons after achieving independence as the state of West Cameroon with an elected parliament, a lively opposition, a vibrant economy thus signifying for many the quintessence of the new Africa where freedom and equality would hold sway, came to unwittingly enmesh herself in the throes of a wholly assimilated neo-colonial French Cameroon” (“Ontogenesis” 1-2). Therefore, postcoloniality for Anglophone Cameroonians is a double-edged sword. There is the catastrophic impact of European colonialism and what Emmanuel Doh has termed “horizontal colonialism”, which is the effective re-colonization of Anglophone Cameroon (West Cameroon) by Francophone Cameroon (La Republic du Cameroun). This is the landscape of Anglophone Cameroon literature.

Anglophone Cameroon literature is thriving and growing in number. However, publishing houses remain scarce and the few existing ones are financially limited since publishing materials need to be imported. This has resulted in fewer literary texts published each year despite the many manuscripts received by publishers. Due to the financial constraints faced by publishers, it is imperative for publishers to carry out joint ventures with other publishers. The success of the African Book Collective founded by seventeen African publishers

shows that when publishers pull resources together, they could greatly overcome financial difficulties. In addition, given the high cost of publishing, Anglophone Cameroon writers should be willing to share publishing costs with the publisher.

Nevertheless, once a book is published, it is not only a cultural artifact, it is a commercial commodity and it needs to be marketed aggressively. This research revealed that Anglophone Cameroon publishers do not treat books as commercial commodities. Before delving into publishing, a publisher must investigate, at least, his immediate market to determine the size of his audience. He also has to determine his distribution chain and work out in advance the publicity strategy for his commodity. The publisher must attempt to determine where his potential readers are located, so he could take the books to them. As Cyprian Ekwensi argues,

There should be a decolonization of African Publishing. Publishers for Africa must find their own style just as publishers for America have done. Our culture recognizes retailing by hawking. If that will be the final answer to making our people read more books, then books must be hawked (107).

Hawking is an effective way of selling in Cameroon as in many African countries. Therefore, booksellers and publishers need to exploit this. There is no point keeping books at a location where nobody would buy them instead of taking them to where the potential buyers congregate like in markets and social gatherings.

The publisher also has to ensure that the book is also financially within reach of his potential reader. For example Maimo's *I Am Vindicated* published by Kraus could not sell in Cameroon because it cost 9000CFA, which was way

above the purchasing power of potential readers. As a foreign publisher, Kraus must have neglected the home market but an indigenous publisher has himself to blame if he cannot sell his book in Cameroon because the cost is above the purchasing power of his audience. In terms of international distribution, the Internet is a good resource to explore. Publishers can create their own websites to promote their books and activities. Creating and maintaining a website is no longer very complicated and the service is now offered free on certain websites like <www.abachood.com>. In this way publishers too could easily network with other publishers through website links.

To further increase dissemination of Anglophone literature, writers need to capitalize on statistics, which show that Anglophone Cameroonians readily read newspapers, magazines and pamphlets. Therefore, Anglophone Cameroonian writers should also use these media to disseminate their works. Hopefully, with the creation of a National Library and a literary archive, these ephemera can be preserved for posterity.

Consequently, the need for a National Library remains urgent. A National Library acquires and preserves the complete material emanating from and relating to the country. It is also expected to carry a completed bibliographic recording of material emanating from and relating to the country, both current and retrospective. However, since evidence from most National Libraries has shown that there is usually an over emphasis on preserving the political history of the country to the detriment of literary documents, the University of Buea, as the only Anglophone University, should take up the duty of a literary archive for

Anglophone Cameroon Literature. Comparing the holdings of the US libraries and the availability of Anglophone Literature in Cameroon points to the fact that in the future when a National Library is created, there will be a dependence on US libraries to get copies, especially of the works published in the first twenty years of independence. Also, without literary archives to preserve their manuscripts and a lack of knowledge on the importance of manuscripts to literary studies, most Anglophone Cameroon writers have not protected their manuscripts. Hence, the manuscripts are either missing or destroyed. Even the printers and publishers are not aware of the literary value of their proofs. Therefore, constructing an accurate edition of a text in future will be fraught with difficulties especially when one notices the number of mistakes done in printing or differences in content from one printing to another. For example, there is a minor but revealing example from Bate Besong's *Beast of No Nation*: In her article "Le Degré Zero...Deconstructing Victimhood", Nalova Lyonga quotes Blindman in Besong's *Beast of no Nation* as saying:

Agbada go
Trouble come

Lyonga gives the page number as 19 without a citation, although her general bibliography indicates that she used the first edition published by Nooremac in 1990. However that same edition used by this writer has the Blindman saying on the same page 19:

Agbada go
Crisis come

So how did this come about? Did the playwright change the word during another print run? “Trouble” and “crisis” may all indicate problems but each carries its own connotation. “Trouble” is more general in nature while “crisis” seems specific. One can only rectify this from the playwright’s original manuscript or publisher’s proofs. Herein lies the need of a literary archive for future literary scholars. At present this may seem unimportant, but in the future without these manuscripts and other important documents concerning the lives of writer it will be almost impossible to construct accurate editions of texts or literary biographies of authors. A tradition of written literature thrives on the preservation of written records as a foundation for new writing. Since this is an information age, there is no excuse for inadequate documentation and preservation of Anglophone Cameroon Literature.

Furthermore, contrary to what the average Anglophone Cameroonian thinks, this research proved that Anglophone Cameroonians read and want to read more of their own literature. The question whether Africans read for pleasure made international by Achebe’s 1970 article in the New York Times “What Do African Intellectuals Read?” has been debated several times without taking into account the particular context of Africa. Several studies (Kotei 1970; Griswold 2000) continue to explain that Africans do read and want to read more but there are several factors that limit the readership. These factors include the problems of dissemination, language, high poverty levels, the communal nature of African societies vis-à-vis Western societies, etc.

Most Africans, including Anglophone Cameroonians, are multilingual despite the presence of foreign official languages. A survey carried out on language use in Cameroon by Koenig, Chia and Povey revealed "Ninety-eight percent of respondents in this survey agreed that for many purposes they regularly and primarily used their African first language with any associates who shared it" (Povey 12). This proves that "in the context of educational policy, [...] the neglected home languages play a far more consistent and dominant role across a wide spectrum of activities than had been allowed (Povey "Introduction" 12). Consequently, it should be borne in mind that reading in European languages in Africa will never be a widespread activity; it will remain the preserve of students, teachers and a small number of educated elite.

Thus there is need for indigenous languages to be brought back to the classrooms. If readers can read in their first language, they will read more even in English. Since indigenous languages are veritable carriers of culture, historically rooted, the languages would help future writers as they open them to a wealth of indigenous creative resources. English, therefore, is only useful as a vehicle of communication with the outside world and a rallying point of solidarity amongst Anglophone Cameroonians, but it cannot be the spring of literary creativity because its roots do not touch the cultural fibers of the writer. Consequently, writers need to tune into their indigenous languages as a cultural source for Anglophone Cameroon literature otherwise Anglophone Cameroon literature in the near future will hit a cul-de-sac. To use Achebe's phraseology, Anglophone Cameroon literature written in English should be written in English

capable of carrying the weight of the sum total of cultures that make up Anglophone Cameroon. It will be English “still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new surroundings” (Achebe “Morning” 103).

Fortunately, in Cameroon there is a move to revive the instruction of indigenous languages in the classroom spearheaded by Maurice Tadajeu, a Cameroonian researcher and linguist. While acknowledging the role of English and French as languages of wider communication, nationally and internationally, Tadajeu insists that indigenous languages need to be added to the two official languages. He holds that “a Cameroon trilingual system should aim at helping each Cameroonian student become *fluent and literate*⁷ in his mother tongue or related provincial tongue [i.e. a “langue véhiculaire”] as well as the two official languages” (qtd. in Krieger 19). Under PROPELCA (Projet de Recherche Operationelle pour l’Enseignement des Langues au Cameroun), a few indigenous languages are being tested in non-state schools as media of instruction to start primary education. As Krieger notes “The curricular and testing structure is designed both to prove the efficacy of mother tongue education as the best preparation for European language competence and to anchor the mother tongue usage as a life-long skill” (22). PROPELCA is making progress and it is hoped that the Cameroon government will move along PROPELCA’s lines in its language policy.

Nevertheless, for those ready to read in English, publishers have to use the means available at their disposal to publicize forthcoming titles. If potential readers do not know that a work is available, they cannot get it to read. Also

⁷ Emphasis is original.

booksellers need to make an effort to captivate readers with creative displays of the books they carry and also a pleasant sales manner. Furthermore, education is the mainstay of most literature hence Anglophone Cameroon writers must continue to increase the number of Anglophone literary texts on the secondary and high school curriculum while university professors must increase the number of Anglophone literary texts taught in their African literature courses and literature in English courses.

In addition, most readers out of school indicate an interest in popular literature; therefore Anglophone Cameroon writers have to write for this group of readers too to balance the types of books available for reading. Although there is a debate on whether lowbrow literature should be encouraged, studies in reading even in Europe show that “of those who read fiction, most read popular fiction: contemporary or historical romances, mysteries, and thrillers. The readership for serious fiction is small indeed, no more than 10 percent of all adults” (Griswold, 110). As a result, there is a need for variety in reading material. As Chinua Achebe proverbially puts it, “Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch too...” (“Things” 19).

An effective conclusion doesn't serve as closure, it serves as foundation for new beginnings; hopefully these conclusions would initiate new beginnings for Anglophone Cameroon literature.

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APPENDIX A

Joyce Abunaw
PhD Candidate in English,
PhD Program in English,
Graduate School & UC.
365 Fifth Ave.
New York, New York 10016
24/09/02

Dear-----

Greetings. I am writing to request your participation in a survey I am carrying out on the dissemination of Anglophone Cameroon literature for my dissertation titled: Landscaping Postcoloniality: The dissemination of Anglophone Cameroon Literature.

As an important production and dissemination outlet, your input is important to this research. I have attached my dissertation abstract for your information. I would be grateful if you can fill out the attached questionnaire.

Thanks in advance,
Joyce Abunaw

APPENDIX B

AFRICAN LITERATURE IN ENGLISH SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE (TEACHERS)

NAME _____

UNIVERSITY/INSTITUTION OF HIGHER
EDUCATION _____

1. What is the title of the course in which African literature is taught?

2. In what Department do you teach this course?

African Literature-----	Linguistics-----
English-----	Performing Arts-----
Anthropology-----	Other (specify)-----
Women studies-----	

3. Give titles, authors and publishers of African literary works taught.
Please indicate if the work is a translation.

4. What African authors and works would you like to teach if everything
was equal?

5. What are the reasons you did not teach these authors and works listed.

Works not available-----
Works not translated-----
Other (explain)-----

APPENDIX C

ANGLOPHONE CAMEROON LITERATURE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE (PUBLISHERS)

Name of publishing company_____

1. How many literary titles in English do you publish in a year?
2. On the average how many literary manuscripts do you receive annually?
3. What genre do you receive most? Prose_____ Poetry_____ Drama_____
3. Which is your preferred genre? Prose____ Poetry_____ Drama_____
4. Do you work in partnership with any other publisher?
5. Do you have any links with a Western publishing house?
6. If you answered "yes" to question 5, could you explain the nature of the link?

7. Have you published any work in English by a non-Cameroonian?
_____If yes list title(s)
8. Do you supply any literary works outside Cameroon?
9. Which literary works have been your bestsellers?
10. What are some of the obstacles you face?
11. What solutions do you propose to the obstacles cited above?

APPENDIX D**ANGLOPHONE CAMEROON LITERATURE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE
(BOOKSHOPS)**

How many titles of Anglophone Cameroon literature do you often carry?

Where do you get your books?

Do you carry any Anglophone Cameroon literature books not on the school syllabus?

What is the average shelf life of a book not on the school syllabus?

Who are your typical customers?

APPENDIX E

ANGLOPHONE CAMEROON LITERATURE ISURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE
(WRITERS)

1. List works you have published and the publishing house (s) utilized?
2. Do you have any completed manuscripts not yet published? _____
3. If "yes" list titles.
4. What genre do you write? Prose_____ Poetry_____ Drama
5. Do you have a literary agent?
6. What problems do you face publishing your work?
7. Do you know whether your works are read outside Cameroon?
8. Is any of your work on the school syllabus in Cameroon?

APPENDIX F

ANGLOPHONE CAMEROON LITERATURE: A COMPREHENSIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PRIMARY TEXTS AND SELECTED CRITICISM

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