

Strategies of Naming in Selected Novels of Alain Mabanckou

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Published date: Dec 04, 2023

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How to cite the article: Otegbale, Edirin Sylvester & Iyiola Amos, "Strategies of naming in selected novels of Alain Mabanckou," *Ahyu: A Journal of Language and Literature* 6 (2023): 102 – 117.

DOI: doi.org/10.56666/ahyu.v6i.166

Abstract

This paper investigates specific naming strategies in *African Psycho*, *Verre Cassé*, and *Black Bazar*, three novels written by Alain Mabanckou. Using the theory of foregrounding and close reading as methodology, the research explores syntactically and semantically how names in the selected texts stylistically mirror the harsh realities of contemporary African societies and the *damnés de la terre* experiences, while maintaining a high level of aesthetics. The study finds that among the numerous forms of stylistic techniques deployed by the writer, the naming of characters through coining, neologism and compounding stand out as a creative stylistic tool in the creation of the chosen texts, reflecting the experiences of Africans in Congo Brazzaville and the black man's experience as an immigrant in France, respectively. The analysed names in the selected texts create new forms of register and emphatically projects the writer's overall message while underlining the anatomical and psychological composition of the characters, their social involvements, and their origins. The research concludes that the act of naming characters in the context of usage within the texts is not only a stylistic tool but a linguistic one that aids in foregrounding the writer's specific messages wherever they are deployed in the texts.

Keywords: *Naming, Foregrounding, Close reading, Black Writing, Alain Mabanckou*

Introduction

Over the years, Black writings in French over the years by male francophone authors have focused on the experiences of the African within the continent and in the

diaspora. Contrary to the image painted in colonial literature such as *Une vie de Boy* (1956) translated as *House Boy* and *Le vieux nègre et la médaille* (1958) translated as the *Old man and the Medal* with attention on the subordination of the black man to servitude and struggle for acceptance by the global society, creative works by contemporary

This article is the outcome of a school held within the research project Recalibrating Afrikanistik, funded by the Volkswagen Foundation

male francophone writers have pushed the boundary forward with emphasis on the ill experiences of black man meted by his fellow black man in auto critical literature after colonization as writers mirror post-colonial Africa with its numerous vices. Sanusi (2015:35) traces this evolution of black writings of Francophone origin by underlining post-colonial literature with thematic thrusts of dictatorship, African feminist writing and twenty-first century migratory writings to portray the shift and progression of thematic preoccupation by Francophone black writers in his *Portrayal of Gender Palavar in Francophone Writings*.

The shift in thematic thrust by Francophone black writers of the African continent goes simultaneously with their manner of presentation with lexical creation becoming prominent. Lexical creation in linguistics referred to as "neologism," constitutes a major form of language manipulation in literary texts as a foregrounding tool (Sharndama15). The aesthetic is brought to the fore of readers through the foregrounded elements, which manifest the strategies of naming deployed in the selected novels examined in this study. Neologism, therefore, as an art and technique of word formation, with a particular attention to nominal creation in this study, is examined in *African Psycho*, *Verre Cassé*, and *Black Bazar*, respectively, as a foregrounding tool for meaning projection in the texts. However, contrary to the general notion of neologism which involves the creation of new words, an ironic approach is embraced through the mode of naming in the selected texts.

With respect to lexical creation in prose fiction of Central African Black writings, Sony Labou Tansi takes the lead with the creation of long hyphenated nouns in his two iconic novels, *La vie et demie (Life and the Half)* and *L'Etat Honteux (Shameful State)*, depicting the ills of dictatorship in the immediate postcolonial African society and attracting the attention of critics for several years. Writers have associated different names with this concept in the process of textual analysis while bringing out the aesthetics of texts. Olowolagba (55) embraces the term "lexical creations," whereas Manirambona (2015) adopts the French version of the same nomenclature, "création lexicale." The nomenclature adopted by the duo was earlier summarized as "neologism," defined as the creation of words. Ayeleru & Edonmi (2009:156) expand the frontiers of this definition, explaining that neologism or word coinage, otherwise known as lexical creation, helps to describe or form new words which appear like the introduction of new registers and the usage of old words in a new and divergent manner to depict a different meaning. The position of Ayeleru & Edonmi (156) is embraced in the analysis of the text from a stylistic literary point of view owing to the ironic nature of using already existed words to convey new meaning, veritably demonstrated by Alain Mabanckou in the selected texts.

Verre Cassé relates the experience of a drunkard, a former primary school teacher disgracefully dismissed because of his life of alcoholism, and charged with the responsibility of writing down the experiences of other drunkards in a bar called *Le crédit a voyagé* (Credit has

travelled) by the owner of the bar. The text contains different stories of the characters, clients of the bar with various sad stories as the writer portrays an aspect of his society often overlooked by writers. *African Psycho* alludes to the novel *American Psycho*, (a novel by Bret Easton Ellis), published in 1991. *African Psycho* relays the story of a young man seeking fame and trying to walk in the footsteps of his idol and most dreaded criminal Angoualima. The story contains Grégoire Nakobomayo failed attempt to impress his idol, Angoualima; ...attempts to kill Angoualima's girlfriend Germaine, but he fails and another aspiring disciple kills. *Black Bazar* resents an experience of an African man, Fessologue, who was deceived by his girlfriend, Couleur d'Origine when she runs away with her lover, to Africa, leaving Fessologue in France. Fessologue later finds solace and comfort in his new passion of writing supported by his new white girlfriend.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of foregrounding was developed in the middle of the 20th century at the Prague School by Irina Vladimirovna Arnold, a scholar in St. Petersburg (Meniailo18). Thus, it is traceable to Russian formalism as a theory of language in textual analysis and explication of literary texts. Some literary theorists are of the opinion that foregrounding is a characteristic of poetry, since poetry appears to be an intentional distortion of standard language. Shuang (2017:475-478) further explains that "the notion of foregrounding comes originally from the visual arts" with its usage for elements that stand out in contrast with others. When applied to literary texts, the theory of

foregrounding is an approach that has proven to be valuable. In close readings of texts, it provides answers to questions about literary motifs and how they come to be and have perceptual prominence in texts (Lottrup & Jensen 34). This is attributed to the psychological effect foregrounding often exploits in writing, as pointed out and explained by Gregoriou (99-102). Foregrounded linguistic elements help to alert readers of literary texts to focus on the main message the writer wishes to convey. The role of the theory of foregrounding with respect to the understanding and appreciation of literary texts varies from one critic to another in the application process of the theory in a close reading of texts. Meniailo (18), while disagreeing with earlier postulations of formalists and poststructuralists who claim that the theory of foregrounding switches attention from content to form, opines that the theory of foregrounding helps in putting a spotlight on significant shades of meaning by drawing readers' attention to certain parts of the text integral to the interpretation of the whole text for proper comprehension of the writer's message and intention. The theory of foregrounding aids in bringing textual patterns to the forefront. Burke (2014:11) emphasises that foregrounding is more of the same and encompasses elements of parallelism and reiteration in texts. In this study, the creation of nominal elements, also known as neologisms, is highlighted as a deviation from the norm.

Lexicalisation of phrases in *African Psycho*

Use of phrases is a veritable naming strategy deployed in *African psycho*. The technique is used throughout the text in

designating names of streets, residential areas, names of establishments such as schools and bars, and names of people. A

comprehensive summary of some selected nominally created linguistic elements in the text is contained in the table below.

S/N	French excerpt	English Translation
Names of streets and places		
i.	Celui-qui-boit-de-l'eau-est-un-idiot (16)	One-who-drinks-water-is-an-idiot
ii.	C'est-toujours-les-mêmes-qui-bouffent-dans-ce-pays-de-merde (16)	It-is-always-the-same-who-eat-in-this-country-of-shit
iii.	Morts-qui-n'ont-pas-droit-au-sommeil (19)	Dead-people-who-have-no-right-to-sleep
Name of the university		
vi.	Moi-je-sais-tout-parce-que-vous-ne-comprenez-rien (81)	Me-I-know-all-because-you-understand-nothing
Name of security operation		
vii.	CIA-Capture immédiate d'Angoulima (77)	Immediate Capture of Angoulima

The first item in the table is a lexicalized phrase used as a name of a street. The nominal French linguistic element "Celui-qui-boit-de-l'eau-est-un-idiot," translated as "One-who-drinks-water-is-an-idiot" consist of a relative Phrase with the third person singular of the present indicative conjugated mode of the verb (boit) from the infinitive "boire"- to drink, the French partitive "de l" with an apostrophe referred to as *article élidé* (l') used in place of "le" because of the presence of the nominal group (eau) that begins with a vowel, the auxiliary verb "est" followed by the indefinite article (un) and a nominal element (idiot). In line with positioning theory, the combination of the various linguistic items used in the lexical creation of the long-hyphenated name draws the reader's attention to the activities that go on in the designated street. Also, from literary point of interpretation in a close reading, the

nominalized "Celui-qui-boit-de-l'eau-est-un-idiot" is a newly formed nominal nomenclature which highlights the projected societal milieu of the text as one that is permissive and allows drunkenness and excessive consumption of alcohol. Thus, it's a place where businesses of the brewery industry thrive. The nominalized phrase also carries an ironic function, as this statement appears in contrast with common beliefs.

Another usage of the technique to project societal realities in the text is associated with the naming of a cemetery. The name of the well-known cemetery in item (iii) of the above table serves as another example of nominalisation utilized by the author to highlight the concept of surrealism in Africa through *African Psycho*. The cemetery's name, "morts-qui-n'ont-pas-droit-au-sommeil," or "dead people who have no right to the sun," marks death as

one of its central thematic concerns. Contrary to the nominal element in item (i) discussed above, the nominal linguistic element in (iii), emphasizes the relationship and interaction of the dead with the living in the context of usage, as the living often result to consultation with the dead. From a foregrounding point of departure, the reader is drawn in by the cemetery's name because of its semantic implication "morts-qui-n'ont-pas-droit-au-soleil". The narrator describes this reality as he draws upon his personal experience in the state of awe with his idol Angoulima- the renowned dreaded criminal of the country who mysteriously disappeared after wreaking havoc on the society, maiming men women and law enforcement agents below.

J'ai essayé aussi de retenir mes sanglots, et le grand maître a commencé à me parler avec sa voix grave...il a commencé à me parler comme il m'a toujours parlé, peut-être aussi comme il parle à tous les malfrats de notre ville qui viennent quémander sa bénédiction, son tutorat pour leurs prochains actes criminels.
Psycho, 133

I also tried to hold back my tears, and the great master began speaking to me in his deep voice... He began speaking to me like he always spoke, perhaps like he always spoke to all the city's criminals, who come pleading for his blessing and mentoring of their next criminal act.

The narrator describes his first contact with his idol at the cemetery and gives an insight into the origin of the cemetery's nickname,

"Morts-qui-n'ont-pas-droit-au-sommeil."

According to the extract above, the reason why the deceased in this surrealist environment are unable to find peace after leaving the realm of the living is due to activities with the living. Some of such activities include frequent consultation of criminals in trainee for consultation with the dead to either plead for their blessings or get their opinions concerning their next intended criminal activities. This implies that among the activities happening in the cemetery, one notable aspect involves aspiring criminals seeking advice from the deceased. These individuals, who are in training to become criminals, visit the cemetery to consult with the dead. They do this either to seek blessings for their unlawful endeavours or to ask for the deceased's opinions on what actions they should take next in their criminal pursuits. This act portrays a surreal and perhaps even superstitious belief in the guidance or approval of the deceased for their criminal activities.

In the above passage, the dead are considered to be busy because of the frequent visit of the living for consultation. The setting also depicts the deceased as the key to the majority of successful criminal actions, suggesting that they may provide ongoing mentoring programme. This reading of Mabanckou departs from the established traditions of asking the dead for justice and blessings, as it has been portrayed by other authors of francophone literature like, for instance, in Sanusi's *Le bistouri de larmes* (2005). Also, in context of usage above, the lexical creation seems to have a foregrounding and ironic function, as the common belief is that dead people bless

the morally upright people. As a result, the name of the cemetery expresses the function and activities performed by the dead, who are represented as beings without rest due to frequent visits by the living for various reasons.

Another manifestation of nominalisation as a stylistic tool in the text as contained in the table above is "C'est-toujours-les-mêmes-qui-bouffent-dans-ce-pays-de-merde". While the nominal linguistic elements "Celui-qui-boit-de-l'eau-is-an-idiot" and "Mortes-qui-n'ont-pas-droit-au-sommeil" emphasise the actions and roles of the people depicted in those milieus. Similarly, the clause "It's always the same people who eat in this shitty country" emphasizes the contradiction within society. It highlights the division between the various social classes in which one group enjoys unrestricted access to social benefits while the other group(s) is disadvantaged.

The stylistic use of naming strategies in *African psycho* also depicts institutions and names of places as the writer seeks to underline the social realities in Congo Brazzaville. The nominal created element "moi-je-sais-tout-parce-que-vous-ne-comprenez-rien"(me-I-know-everything-because-you-know-nothing) is used by the narrator to reveal the hypocrisy in educational institutions. Apart from capturing the attention of the readers as the main thrust of foregrounding theory, analysis of the constituent parts of the nominally created elements here depict academics in educational institutions as manipulative, preying on the public's ignorance on relevant issues where they claim to be experts. This is evident in the

naming of the university that designates the general public as ignorant, thereby creating room for academics to twist events and the narrative while projecting themselves as smart individuals. Thus, academics are depicted as hypocrites and opportunists who prey on the ignorance of the public in the context of the text.

The usage of "CIA-Capture immédiate d'Angoualima" departs from the author's custom of using lengthy, hyphenated words in order to underline the significance of lowering crime in society. In the United States of America, the acronym CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) depicts the country's foremost agency tasked with gathering and evaluating foreign intelligence as well as carrying out overt activities. In order to give it a new meaning in *African psycho*, CIA, is parodied. This famous organization is given a new meaning when it is domesticated in the narrative explained by the narrator.

Le bureau que le préfet avait ouvert et dénommé CIA (capture immédiate d'Angoualima) due fermer une semaine après. Les habitants [...] préféraient aller faire la queue devant le CIA en débitant des informations...de quelqu'un qui avait vu quelqu'un qui avait vu quelqu'un qui avait vu Angoualima. *Psycho*, 77

After one week, the newly opened and designated CIA (capture immediate of Angoualima) office was forced to close. Citizens preferred to go to the CIA and line up to provide information about

someone who had seen someone who had seen someone who had seen Angoualima.

In the context of the aforementioned passage, the domesticated CIA function is comparable to the supervisory role of the famed US Central Intelligence Agency. The narrator describes the collection of information from those connected to those who have seen Angoualima as a type of preventative action to counteract criminal activity since such information would assist find the bandit and maintain national security. In line with the tenets of the theory of foregrounding, the development of a new word from an existing one, or the formation of a neologism in the context of this research, aids in drawing attention to the theme of national security and the public's awareness of it. The synergy between security agencies in the text and the population is highlighted to show the corporate social responsibilities of citizens working together with security agencies to fight crime and maintain a healthy society.

Naming in *Verre Cassé*

In *Verre Cassé*, meaning projection is greatly aided by nomenclature. It aids in illustrating the personalities and the fluidity of the occurrences. Principal character names here have metaphorical connotations. The names that were chosen for analysis in this section provides in-depth information on the characters in the text, focusing on various facets of their existence. The table below provides a summary of a few of the selected nominal linguistic components examined.

S/N	French Excerpt	English Translation
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i.	Escargot Entêté (37)	Stubborn snail
ii.	Zéro Faute (168)	Without Fault
iii.	Robinette (94)	Tap
iv.	Le Type aux Pampers (41)	The one wearing Pampers
v.	L'Imprimeur (61)	Printer
vi.	Cameronais (Cameruineuse) (140)	Cameroonian women (ruinous)
Vii	Verre Cassé (11)	Broken glass

Item (i) -Escargot Entêté - is metaphorical. The character's lifestyle and traits are directly compared to those of a snail. As shown in the extract below, the narrator compares the character to a typical snail with a thick shell in a challenging climatic situation.

Escargot Entêté est toujours là, et pourtant il est toujours debout, résolu comme un joueur d'échecs, et il a vu les années passer en un combat douteux, et il a vu les jaloux... et il a résisté à la conjuration des imbéciles, et il a vu les autres commerçants le traiter de sorcier... *Verre*, 37

Stubborn Snail is always present, despite the fact that he is always steadfast, resolute like a chess player, and he has seen the years pass in a tense battle, and he has seen the envious...and he has resisted the conspiracy of imbeciles, and he has

seen the other traders address him as a sorcerer...

With his victory over several tough times and situations, such as the plot of idiots and the dubious conflict in the aforementioned example, Escargot Entêté endurance, as attributed by the narrator, comes to the fore. This encapsulated the rationale behind the character's designation as "Escargot Entêté". The mental image of a snail with a hard shell draws attention to the character's resilience in accordance with the guidelines of the theory of foregrounding.

As the narrator paints a picture of the reality of falsehood via magic on the African continent, Zéro Faute is another figure who stands out in the text. The capitulation of the person in self-defence against Verre Cassé's allegation sums up the rationale behind such a name:

est-ce-que je fais l'exploitation de l'homme par l'homme, moi, je suis quand même Zéro Faute, demandez à n'importe qui et on vous dira que moi j'ai fait recouvrer la vue aux aveugles, les jambes aux paralytiques, la voix aux muets, les ovules aux femmes stériles, l'érection aux hommes qui ne bandaient plus... *Verre*, 168

do I carry out the exploitation of man by man? Ask anyone, and they will tell you: restore sight to the blind; give legs to the paralyzed; give voice to the deaf; give a womb to sterile women; restore erections to men who can no longer perform.

Zéro Faute's self-proclaimed success depicts him as someone who never makes a mistake and only conducts honourable deeds in society. It uncovers his hypocrisy as a person who doesn't have a feeling of responsibility. His inability to handle criticism during the inquiry "Est-ce que je fais l'exploitation de l'homme par l'homme?" (Am I exploiting man by man?) highlights the character's disdain for criticism. Zéro Faute is shown to be conceited and full of himself in this way. As a result of the foregrounding principles being used, Zéro Faute's name draws the reader's attention since an interested reader wants to learn more about this faultless character.

Metaphorical names, like L'Imprimeur (the Printer), Le Type aux Pampers, Robinette, and Cameruneuse summarize and expose the characters' experiences. Because of his professional experience in France, L'Imprimeur is known as l'imprimeur as contained in the expression "Je travaille dans une large imprimerie" (P. 67). The narrator considers and uses "un pauvre gars qui en est réduit aujourd'hui à porter des couches Pampers comme un nourrisson" (*Verre*, 41) [a poor person who is reduced today to wearing Pampers like a baby] in his nomenclature for le type aux pampers. Le Type aux pampers, according to the narrator's description, is a man who is medically unfit.

The name "Robinette" (tap) and "Cameruneuse (cameruners)" are also derived from the characters' actions. The narrator's introduction of Robinette reveals why she is viewed as summarized in the extract below.

c'est une vraie femme de fer que le patron voulait me coller comme copine, je croyais qu'il plaisantait parce que Robinette boit plus que moi... Robinette boit, boit encore sans même se souler, et quand elle boit comme ça elle va pisser derrière le bar au lieu d'aller aux toilettes comme tout le monde, et quand elle pisse derrière le bar elle met aux moins dix minutes à uriner sans s'arrêter, ça coule et coule encore comme si on avait ouvert une fontaine publique... *Verre*, 94

it's truly a strong lady that the Patron wanted to get me entangled with as a girlfriend; I believe he was joking because Robinette drinks more than I do... Robinette drinks, and then drinks some more, and when she drinks like that, she goes behind the bar instead of going to the toilet like everyone else, and when she pisses behind the bar, she urinates for at least ten minutes without stopping, and then the sand flows again as if a public fountain had been opened...

The name "Robinette" is given to this character to help with foregrounding. The development of a non-existent feminine variant of the French "robinet" (tap) to actualize "Robinette" catches the reader's attention due to its novelty in foregrounding terms. The name is figurative, directly comparing the character to a tap running. The volume of urine and the time spent passing it by the character are huge in the excerpt. The analogy to a fountain in terms of the volume of urine

passed portrays the figure as one of the town's longest pissers. This is consistent with the narrator's final comment on Robinette, who declares "tous les gars qui ont essayé de la concurrencer en matière de pisser... ont été vaincus" (*Verre*. 94) [all the males who attempted competing with her in the act of peeing... were beaten]. As a result, the character is presented as having the uncommon talent of being the bar's biggest pisser.

The noun "Cameruineuse," which was used once in "*Verre cassé*," is a slang term for female Cameroonians. It is a play on words between 'Camerunaise' (Cameroonian woman) and the word 'ruineuse' (ruinous woman). Cameruineuse is created by combining the root form of the adjective "camerounaise" (came) with the independent adjective "ruineuse," which is derived from the verb "ruiner" (to ruin). The newly coined term "cameruineuse" appears to be damaging in the context of the novel. "Les Camerounaises, il n'y a pire que elles; elles sont tellement matérialistes et intéressés qu'on les appelle cameruineuse," the narrator continues (*Verre*. 140) (Nobody is worse than the Cameroonians; they are so materialistic and interested that they are called 'cameruineuse'). At this point in the narrative, the development of the new term and the meaning provided by the narrator assist to convey stereotypes about Cameroonian women.

The title, *Verre Cassé*, (*Broken Glass*) which doubles as the name of the principal character and scribe in the text, carries a metaphoric implication. The "broken text" writing style corresponds to the narrator's

and scribe's life style as well as his perception. The metaphoric implication of the title is vividly demonstrated in the scribe's encounter with his wife's family members before arriving at Zéro Faute's house as well as his summation of his bleak future at the end of the text when he says "Je criais, honte à vous gens de peu de foi, vous ne pouvez rien contre moi, a-t-on jamais vu un verre cassé être réparé?" the narrator observes (p.163) (I cried, "Shame on you people of little faith, have you never seen a broken glass that is repaired?"). The submission of the scribe at this juncture is figurative, as he compares his life to a broken glass that is capable of being repaired, much to the amazement of his wife's family members who came to forcefully take him to a traditional healing medicine man. Depicting himself as a broken glass, suggests the uselessness of the character. A broken glass is useless to the owner as it can no longer hold liquids and poses a risk of injury. As a result, the character is portrayed as useless and dangerous since a broken glass can give the handlers a cut. Thus, the character is portrayed as a threat to the wellbeing of his neighbours. This is underlined in his wife, Angelic' remark - "c'est bon de boire mais faut pas polluer l'existence de ceux qui ne boivent pas" (*Verre*,159) (it is good to drink but... must not pollute the lives of those who do not drink).

The art of naming in the text also plays an important role in exploring the nuances of Congolese society and culture, as well as portraying characters' distinct experiences

in a compelling and emotive way. The nominalized word "sorciergentilhomme," and "Papa Labas" which are used to characterize the protagonist's grandpa and father are classic examples. The lexicon generated is a combination of the French lexicons "sorcier" (wizard) and "gentilhomme" (gentleman). The nominalized word emphasizes and reflects the character's varied and multidimensional nature. The character's personality is regarded as paradoxical, since he is both a gentleman and a magician. This depicts the character as ironic with several personalities. Similarly, "papa Labas" derived from the French terms "papa" (dad) and "là-bas" (over there) metaphorically imply and mirror the protagonist's father's remoteness and absence in his life. This means that the father was absent from the child's life and had no influence on his upbringing from close reading of the text.

Naming in Black Bazar

In *Black Bazar*, a number of different naming strategies are used to depict several societal realities and different identities. Some of the truths contained in the text's ostensibly invented parts include the characters' ethnicities, genealogical relationships and origins, race, and sexual interests. The table below presents some of the nominal linguistic features that were selected for study for their meaning and relevance to the analysis.

S/N	French Excerpt	English Translation
i.	Fessologue (67)	Fessologue
ii.	Hippocrate (32)	Hippocrate

iii.	Couleur d'origine (62)	Colour of origin
iv.	La fievre bleu, la fievre orange, la fievre arc-en-ciel (15)	Blue fever, orange fever, rainbow fever
v.	Roger, le Franco-Ivoirien (12)	Roger, the French-Ivorian
vi.	Bosco "Le Tchadien, Paul Valéry Noir" (64)	Bosco, « The Tchadian, the Black Paul Valery »
vii.	Yves «L'Ivoirien tout court » (64)	Yves «the short Ivorian»
viii.	Paul du grand Congo (p.12)	Paul of the Big Congo
ix.	Pierrot Le Blanc du Petit Congo (64)	Pierrot the White of small Congo
x.	Vladimir Le Camerounais (65)	Vladimir the Cameroonian

Items v-x in the table above are compound nouns that serve as proper nouns for certain characters. In the text, Roger, le Franco-Ivoirien, Paul du Grand Congo, Pierrot Le Blanc du Petit Congo, and Vladimir Le Camerounais are all compound nouns which are nicknames formed by adding a national description. The reader's and critic's attention is called to the affixed national nomenclatures to their names in line with the rules of the philosophy of foregrounding. This strategy gives the reader background information about the characters by drawing the reader's attention to their individual nations of origin. Additional information attached to Bosco's first names ("Le Tchadien," "Paul Valéry Noir," and "Yves ("L'Ivoirien tout court") implies their interests and physical appearance as that of a poet and a small person. Both characters are foregrounded differently by the writers in this regard. While the former is described as creative

and a lover of poetry, the latter is portrayed in the novel as being of small size in relation to his fellow African countrymen. As the narrator seeks to emphasize the common feature of migration among

Africans who meet in France in search of better pastures, the approach also puts all migrants as outsiders in France. This is consistent with Otegbale's (2019:31) submission that "l'auteur a décidé d'adopter cette façon de présentation pour souligner la diversité des noirs qui se réunissent à Paris" (the author decides to adopt this manner of presentation to highlight the diversity of the African race that gathers in Paris).

Other names like Fessologue, Couleur d'Origine, and Hippocrate foreground the thematic obsession of knowledge in the science of female buttocks, racial colour, and racist inclinations. Similar to how Tansi's "Sourrissonner" in *La vie et demie* was constructed from the French verb "sourir," (Ayeleru & Endonmi, 2009:156), the nominal element "Hippocrate" is close to the adjective "hypocrite" in French like the English translation "hypocrite". Fessologue credits the name to his difficulty in pronouncing the original French adjective, adding that "à la force de l'entendre dire ce nom Hippocrate, on a fini par surnommer Hippocrate" (*Bazar*, 34). (On hearing him say the name Hippocrate, we ended up nicknaming him Hippocrate.) (After hearing

him repeat the term Hippocrate, we decided to call him Hippocrate.) His demeanor is also highlighted as a cause for the name's confirmation. "Monsieur Hippocrate n'est qu'un locataire, pourtant il se comporte en propriétaire. On le prend pour le concierge de l'immeuble puisque son appartement est juste à l'entrée du bâtiment" (*Bazar*, 35) (Mr. Hippocrate is only but a tenant, yet he behaves as the landlord. One mistakes him for the caretaker of the building since his apartment is just in front of it.) The incorrect spelling of the adjective acts as a real instrument in drawing the reader's attention to this character in the text from a foregrounding point of departure. Additionally, the character is positioned as a person with flawed character and lacking integrity because he appears to be what he is not (Robert Pratique, 2013:721), in line with the submission on his behavior and the literal meaning of the original adjective "Hypocrite" as "personne qui a de l'hypocrisie" (Robert Pratique, 2013:721).

The name Couleur d'Origine (Original colour) is coined from the combination of the French feminine nouns "couleur" and "origine" joined by the preposition "d(e)." Basic details regarding this character's appearance and ancestry are indicated by the name. The narrator describes how he came up with this appellation after thinking about the color of his former girlfriend's saying, "Je l'avais surnommé Couleur d'origine à cause de sa peau très noire" (*Bazar*, 62) (I had nicknamed him Original Color because of his very dark skin). The character's name highlights and celebrates the elegance of the African woman in the text. Additionally, it shows how unique Africans' colour pigmentation is compared

to that of other races. The character's skin colouring is therefore seen as her trademark of ancestry as the formed compound noun compels the reader to focus on the individual in the text in line with the principles of foregrounding.

From close reading point of departure, the character is portrayed as a proud African with reference to the popular black movement and philosophy "Negritude" which celebrates black ancestry and culture. Thus, the writer stylistically celebrates his ancestry as an African via the nominalisation of the character's name and project the pride of the African skin pigmentation as the character is celebrated for keeping her original skin colour in contrast to those who use bleaching cream to lighten theirs.

Fessologue is derived from the term "fessologie." Otegbale (2019 :18) says that «fessologie est une étude des fesses (femmes), aussi connue comme la Face B ». [Fessology, often known as Face B, is the study of female buttocks]. The name is a combination of the words "fesse" (buttocks) and "logue" (science specialist). The name's interpretation from the two basic words denotes mastery of the act of "fessologie". That is to say, Fessologue, as the character's name suggests, is an expert in the science of women's buttocks. This lexical creation is also ironic in its usage owing to the fact that nouns ending with- logie/logy are considered very important scientific fields of knowledge. The narrator confirms this view when he explains the significance of the movement of various feminine buttocks in the excerpt below.

Je lui rappelle donc les différents types de faces B. Je lui dis qu'il y a des derrières quand tu les vois remuer, tu es carrément déçu, tu demandes : mais est-ce que c'est vraiment un derrière que je vois là ? Tu la plains parce que tu ne sais pas dans quelle direction il tourne, parce qu'il n'a jamais de gueule, parce qu'il va à gauche, parce qu'il ne va jamais à droite comme s'il y avait un danger de ce côté-là, qu'il revient brusquement au point de départ, *Bazar*, p. 67

I reminded him that there are different types of buttocks. I told him that there are buttocks that, when you see them move, you are really disappointed: you ask yourself, "What really is this buttock I am seeing?" You complain about them because you don't understand which direction they turn, because they lack direction, because they turn to the left, because they never turn to the right as if there is danger over there, and because they return suddenly to the point of departure

Following the narrator's identification of diverse buttocks as a master in the process of researching female buttocks, an explanation of the numerous categories with regard to their psychology in male-female romantic interactions and general comportment follows.

J'ajoute qu'il y a un autre type de derrières, leur problème à eux c'est qu'il remue trop vite de haut en bas

...tu verras qu'elle est agressive pour un rien, qu'elle te fixe de faux rendez-vous... Je précise à Pierrot le blanc qu'il y a d'autres types de derrières, c'est pire, ils sont coincés, ils ne remuent que par à-coups, ils tremblotent, ils sont épileptiques, ... Ceux-là se sont des derrières à vitesse tout plats comme une autoroute qu'on vient de construire. On trouve de tels derrières chez certaines intellectuelles. *Bazar*, 67-68

I add that there is another type of buttocks; their problem is that they move too fast up and down...you will discover that they are aggressive over nothing, they will fix a false rendez-vous with you...I précised to Pierrot the White that there are other types of buttocks, it is worse, they are squeezed, they move only by chance, they shiver, they are epileptic...these are the buttocks which are quite flat like a newly constructed road. We find such buttocks with female intellectuals.

Whereas the character's name is capable of attracting the reader's attention in accordance with foregrounding principles due to its semantic connotation as master of the science of female buttocks. Fessologue's role separates colleagues at the Jip, their meeting point. In accordance with the foregoing extracts, his ability to distinguish and classify the many sorts of buttocks and their meanings qualifies the Fessologue as a man who likes to observe women. Fessologue is portrayed as a man who has

had countless encounters with various ladies. A reader can conclude from Fessologue's feminine charm and mastery of the science of female buttocks that the nominal creation is a consequence of his capacity to interpret female psychology from the makeup of their butts.

Conclusion

In Alain Maban Kou's *African Psycho*, *Verre Cassé*, and *Black Bazar*, there is an effective use of the art of naming as a creative technique and a verifiable means of meaning projection in line with the principles of foregrounding and close reading of text for meaning recovery. In *African Psycho*, nominally created linguistic elements are primarily used to highlight the lives and activities of the characters in their environments. Irony and humour are achieved in the formation of an entirely new word by fusing together pre-existing words to create lengthy hyphenated nouns, as well as in the distortion of the composition of pre-existing words to create completely new words with unique meaning and in-depth information. Life experiences, occupations, physical circumstances, and general demeanours are highlighted in *Verre Cassé* with a metaphorical undertone. The ethnic consciousness and origin of the characters in *Black Bazar* are underlined alongside their nationality and interests through the interpretation and attribution of new meaning to existing terms. This method, as it is applied in the texts, emphasizes the physiological and psychological make-up of the characters, as well as their social engagements and origins. The use of naming is consistent with Achebe's (1975) assertion that a man's name sums up how life has treated him

because it offers details such as his joy, sorrow, grievances against fellow men, complaints, successes, and occasionally historical accounts. This is particularly true of the names of the main characters in *Verre Cassé* and *Black Bazar*. Also, lexical creations in the form of the coining, neologism and compounding of words in the art of naming as used in the texts, depict and foreground the message of the texts and create aesthetics in the texts. This is due to the fact that overall, Maban Kou makes effective use of names to illustrate the social and cultural influences that form his characters' lives and to portray their experiences while evoking emotions, and contributing significantly to the overall style and impact of the selected texts before the readers.

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