

## Crossing the border between postcolonial reality and the *outer world*: Translation and representation of the third space into a fourth space

Cruzar la frontera entre la realidad poscolonial y el *mundo exterior*: Traducción y representación del tercer espacio en un cuarto espacio

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**ABSTRACT:** Stemming from poststructuralist interpretations of space and following Bhabha's third space enunciation, in this paper we have coined the term *fourth space* and used this concept as a heuristic tool to address the need to establish a coherent standpoint for the analysis of postcolonial literature reception within a society with no immediate relation to the specific decolonisation process of the author's country. We explore this concept through the case of the Spanish reception of African postcolonial literature. In Spain, this perspective has remained under-theorised in an era when representation of hybridity is at a vital point, since such representation will provide the social scaffolding for each person's identity construction. Under these circumstances, literature can be transformative and the role of translation as a decolonising tool can help to create unbiased knowledge through an intentionally objective and unprejudiced interpretation of the original texts. We will analyse how those differentiating elements affect the translational process.

**Keywords:** Fourth space, third space, representation, epistemological spaces, postcolonial translation.

**RESUMEN:** A raíz de las interpretaciones postestructuralistas del espacio y siguiendo parcialmente la articulación del *tercer espacio* de Bhabha, en este artículo hemos acuñado el término *cuarto espacio*, utilizando este concepto como una herramienta heurística que aborde la necesidad de establecer una postura coherente con el análisis de la recepción de la literatura poscolonial en una sociedad que carezca de una relación inmediata con el proceso de descolonización específico del país del autor. Exploramos el concepto a través de la recepción de la literatura poscolonial africana en España. En este país, dicha perspectiva aún

tiene muchas vertientes sin desarrollar en una época en la que la representación de la hibridación está en un momento vital, ya que la representación proporciona el andamiaje social para la construcción de la identidad individual. En este contexto, la literatura se torna transformadora y el rol que asume la traducción como herramienta descolonizadora puede contribuir a crear conocimiento sin sesgos a partir de una interpretación del texto original que se pretende sea objetiva y carente de prejuicios. Se analizará cómo estos elementos diferenciadores afectan al proceso traslativo.

*Palabras clave:* cuarto espacio, tercer espacio, representación, espacios epistemológicos, traducción poscolonial.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Spain's ethnic diversity has increased steadily mainly due to the immigration phenomenon. Over the period 2000-2014, the number of foreign nationals rose by 533 percent, reaching 10.7 percent of the total population, according to data provided by the INEbase<sup>1</sup>, Spain's National Statistics Institute database. There has, however, been little mixing of cultures and people remain largely ignorant of those fellow citizens whose mother tongue they do not share (Otero Roth, 2007; Moreno Fernández, 2009).

Against this background, cultural expressions are a powerful tool to gain insight into other realities, such as colonial and postcolonial experiences. Thus, literature plays here a major role in the representation of the *third space*. However, publishing criteria have been erratic and academic research has mostly replicated Western academy tendencies regarding postcolonial studies. The BDAFRICA database shows the increasing impact of the reception of African literature in Spain from 1972 to 2014 (Fernández Ruiz et al., 2016 and 2018), which proves that cultural expressions can be an appropriate contribution not only to facilitate the integration of foreign nationals, but also to sow the seeds in order to challenge the general conception of the established world order in the individual sphere.

The spatial imaginary must be challenged at a global scale because African decolonisation has had a global impact that continues to reverberate even today through economic neocolonialism. Thus, representation becomes a key concept within this global imaginary. In this regard, literary productions can play an active and transformative role by creating knowledge through interpretation. The exclusive inclusion of Western canonical texts in primary and secondary education has remained the mainstream practice. The introduction of African fiction has often been neglected or sometimes limited to occasional exotic readings. This situation does not differ much at the university level. Miampika and García de Vinuesa (2009: 98) pointed out that “[o]ne of the particular challenges facing Spanish higher education is how to incorporate alternative ‘non-western’ areas of knowledge – those highly differentiated areas that derive, for instance, from the vast African continent”. Undoubtedly, this is bidirectional, since postcolonial studies are not as present in the curricula as would be desirable: “[P]ostcolonial (literary) studies in Spain is arguably in the ascendancy, although [...] it still has a long way to go

<sup>1</sup> The database is accessible at <http://www.ine.es/dyngs/INEbase/listaoperaciones.htm>.

before it can consider itself an institutionalized field” (Miampika and García de Vinuesa, 2009: 99).

## 2. A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

The methodology we have used to develop the new episteme of fourth space and to explain how it conditions the reception of postcolonial literature intertwines discourse analysis, poststructuralism, social representation and social constructivism theories and the third space theory.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the linguistic turn and theories about the power of language in any field emerged. Lacan (1953) warned that reality does not create language, but language creates reality. Foucault (1980) developed the tactical concept of the *microphysics of power*; an idea which advocates that subtlety of any form of manipulation is in direct proportion to its impact. André Lefevere went much further to state that reality does not exist, and what do exist are linguistic constructions of reality; language becomes, therefore, a power agent:

The second control factor, which operates mostly outside the literary system as such, will be called ‘patronage’ here, and it will be understood to mean something like the powers (persons, institutions) that can further hinder the reading, writing, and rewriting of literature. It is important to understand ‘power’ here in the Foucauldian sense, not just, or even primarily, as a repressive force.

(Lefevere, 1992: 15)

This line of thought is endorsed by other authors, such as Baudrillard in titles as suggestive as *Simulacres et simulation* (1981) or *La Guerre du Golfe n’a pas eu lieu* (1991).

This poststructuralist approach challenges concepts such as truth and transforms historiography into a literary genre. From the point of view of poststructuralist politics, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) stated, in the same vein, that the world does not exist or, as Åhäll and Borg asserted “the world does not exist intelligibly outside of the meaning that human beings ascribe to it. Discourse [...] is constitutive of *reality*” (2013: 198). Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher also claimed, in an interview on 23 September 1987, that “there is no such thing as society”. Although her statement was uttered in a radically different context and with a particular scope, it leads us once more to the idea that social representation is a result of social constructivism.

Social representation theory has drawn on concepts from various fields, such as sociology, psychology or anthropology. Back in 1912, the French sociologist Durkheim developed the notion of *collective representations*, but it would not be until 1961 when the Romanian social psychologist Moscovici coined the term *social representation*<sup>2</sup> and described how the community’s way of thinking affects and influences the individual. This theory posits that representation is an act of thought, which is why the world, society and culture do not exist, except in the subject’s mind. Thus, when individuals are confronted with new information that does not fit into their own worldviews, a conflict arises which, according to Moscovici, is resolved either by *anchoring* or *objectification*. Anchoring relates this new information to individuals’ already known reality by

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<sup>2</sup> The notion of *social representation* has been thoroughly researched from a discourse perspective by discourse analysts such as Fairclough (1995), Wodak (2001) or van Dijk (2015), which also connect it to the idea of *social constructivism*.

integrating it in their mental structures, while objectification turns abstract concepts into something concrete, into an immediate reality.

*Social constructivism*, a term coined by Berger and Luckmann in 1966, holds that individuals within a society construct mental representations of the reality that surrounds them, that is, they rationalise their experiences by creating society or world models.

Within their society, subjects share their worldview and social representations. Since these social representations are cognitive, and therefore based on their own experience and stored knowledge, they cannot be replicated as such. However, as Sperber and Claidière (2008: 291) state: “Even if not communicated to others, these idiosyncratic mental representations do contribute to shaping behavior and, as a result, something of their tenor seeps through into the causal chains of social communication”.

Therefore, although linguistic interactions depend highly on the hearer’s interpretive resemblance to the speaker’s intention, their social reality is created and established through their language and behaviour. In the heart of smaller groups, such as a community of practice<sup>3</sup>:

mutual engagement, jointly negotiated enterprise and shared repertoire of resources (Wenger, 1998: 72–85) [makes it] worthwhile to place focus on these groups – communities of practice – as potential initiators and transmitters of language change.

(Jucker and Kopaczyk, 2013: 7)

This language change will eventually have an impact on the construction of their social reality. Social constructivism is heavily influenced by the linguistic turn, leads us to the personal construct theory, which emphasises the constructive nature of experience.

In terms of representation of the other, this proves that identity is not only determined by social or historical circumstances, but creates common institutionalised knowledge within a society and reverts in the process of identity formation. Hence, due to the social representation factors that help construct identity, "identification is often a matter of imposition and resistance" (Jenkins, 1996: 73).

Language, as post-structuralists and social constructionists claim, is a powerful tool to construct representations of reality and, subsequently, has an impact upon social and individual identity formation. Said (1978) denounced this biased use of language to represent Western perceptions of Eastern cultures, since binary oppositions lead to metonymic representations and negative stereotyping. This first questioning of Western representation gave way to the postmodern turn developed in the theoretical approaches of Spivak and Bhabha.

Spivak (1988) coined the term *epistemic violence*, which refers to violence exerted against the postcolonial subject through discourse, and addresses representation of the subaltern, distinguishing between Marx’s use of the German terms *vertreten*, which means *to represent* as *speaking for* in a political sense, and *darstellen*, which means *to re-present* in a more artistic and philosophical way. According to Chakrabarti, “Spivak had [...] used affirmative deconstruction as a means to subvert the hegemonic formations of Western historiography” (2012: 6).

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<sup>3</sup> “A community of practice is an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations –in short, practices– emerge in the course of this mutual endeavor. As a social construct, a community of practice is different from the traditional community, primarily because it is defined simultaneously by its membership and by the practice in which that membership engages” (Eckert and McConnellGinet, 1992: 464).

Bhabha, for his part, has enabled postcolonial studies take a big leap forward by developing, among others, the concepts of *hybridity* and *third space*, which have subsequently been exported to and applied in a range of fields. He builds on Turner's definition of liminality, an ambiguous state "when the past has lost its grip and the future has not yet taken definite shape" (Turner, 1992: 133). For Bhabha, this in-between moment is 'an expanded and ex-centric site of experience and empowerment' (Bhabha, 2004: 6). For Kalua, this liminal state has a "transformative nature" and "represents a phase in the life of a subject –an individual, a community, or a nation– which belies any attempts at settled assumptions about its identity because of inherent contradictions and instabilities that often come to haunt the subject" (2009: 24).

Bhabha (1994: 67) confronts this hybridity in terms of identity and representation: The construction of the colonial subject in discourse, and the exercise of colonial power through discourse, demands an articulation of forms of difference – racial and sexual. Such an articulation becomes crucial if it is held that the body is always simultaneously (if conflictually) inscribed in both the economy of pleasure and desire and the economy of discourse, domination and power.

The postcolonial aftermath has given way to common representational spaces, where the subjects experience different degrees of hybridity, ambivalence and mimicry. Bhabha draws, thus, from aspects of psychoanalysis inherited from Fanon. He asserts that there is a space "in-between the designations of identity" and that "this interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (Bhabha, 1994: 4). Chakrabarti (2012: 12) differs from this idealistic approach in stating that:

What Bhabha is trying to achieve is a dynamic of equality between the First and the Third World in terms of representation. We need not overemphasize the possibilities of such equality, but the movement out of the political into the psychological or the Imaginary can at least ensure a pluralistic, uncertain, ambivalent framework for the construction of identity.

However, Bhabha (2013: 108) clearly sees that "[p]ostcoloniality, for its part, is a salutary reminder of the persistent 'neo-colonial' relations within the 'new' world order". Thus, it is time for representation to be addressed at a global scale and challenged in the fourth space, that is, those cultures that had assumed the hegemonic values, such as Spain, Italy, Germany, Greece or so many other countries with very limited experience in colonisation in Africa.

Hence, Bhabha proposes rethinking cultural identity in countries which have suffered colonial domination, while we propose recognising, approaching, relating to and representing that cultural identity beyond those countries' borders. Before providing a definition of the fourth space, we will first discuss how this term has been deployed and understood by other authors in different fields of knowledge.

Aldama (2009) identified a fourth space in Salman Rushdie's fiction, which materialises into magical realism in a postcolonial society, a fictional zone where the first space (which he assigns to Europeans) and the third space (which occurs in places such as India) meet. However, Westphal (2011: 72) refutes this idea by stating that it refers to an already known episteme: "Aldama and Rushdie somehow attribute to fourth space those qualities that are found in the third space described earlier by Bhabha and others".

Noriko Miura (2000: 97) analysed Kenji Nakagami's work, who interpreted the fourth space as a zone emptied of all meaning, but with the ability to reverse or cancel any element or situation:

Dualism causes the exclusion of the other; triangulation creates a hybrid space which is still the object of discrimination, and the opposites are always mediated through the neutral or hybrid space and do not interact directly. Addition of another angle, however, produces the continuous flow of transformation into the opposite. This accounts for what is regarded as the innovative feature of Nakagami's zone: the constant interaction and rotation of the opposites in which the life turns to death, purity to impurity, inside to outside, and vice versa.

Dasgupta (2003) went beyond Bhabha's third space and hybrid identities to demand a fourth space where South Asian women can be represented and heard. We, however, understand that this claim is more related to Spivak's condemnation of the double marginalisation suffered by postcolonial women (1988) and Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality (1989). In the sociology of space, Thrift (2003) defined four spaces in modern human geography, where the fourth space is a place meant to connect with people's affective potentials. In geriatric medicine, it is common to use the concept of fourth space to refer to old age. In global art, Hernández-Navarro (2010: 179) mentions a fourth space meaning a space-time, which is:

irrepresentable, conflictivo y no visible del todo. El museo global deberá aprender a trabajar con esa dimensión compleja e irrepresentable, abriéndose al antagonismo y al trabajo con la metáfora, en esa conflictividad de lo irresoluble. Sólo así podrá idear fórmulas de trabajar con lo móvil, lo complejo y lo asincrónico.  
(unrepresentable, conflictive and not fully visible. The global museum must learn to work with this complex and unrepresentable dimension, opening up to antagonism and metaphorical work, in an inextricable conflict. Only in this way, is it possible to develop approaches to work with the mobile, the complex and the asynchronous).

In postcolonial literature, Chebinou refers to the fourth space as an imaginary space in her analysis of female identity and intercultural love in works by Leïla Sebbar, Jacqueline Manicom and Ken Bugul. In one of these novels, "le quatrième espace n'est ni l'Algérie, ni la France, ni la mixité qui représenterait un troisième espace mais un espace imaginaire" (the fourth space is not Algeria nor France, nor the hybridity which would represent a third space, but an imaginary space, 2015: 58). It entails "du retour spatial et temporel" (a return back in time and space, 2015: 66).

Bagger-Petersen (2012) identified four transformative spaces in film production using *Beijing Bicycle*, the Chinese version of Vittorio de Sica's *Ladri di biciclette*, as an example: the space of the capital, that of the market, the space of the political and, as a fourth space, that of the creative.

Having seen all these meanings for the term, we should recall that although our definition of the fourth space does not directly correlate with Bhabha's third space, a relation between both terms is suggested, where the third space is linked to identity and the fourth space to representation within the context of postcolonial spaces.

### 3. DEFINITION OF THE FOURTH SPACE AND REVISION OF THE ROLE OF RECEPTION AGENTS OF POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURE

This paper intends to postulate the existence of a fourth space as a heuristic tool in the postcolonial world. This section will map the reception of postcolonial literature from different standpoints to show the performance of the fourth space regarding the colonial appropriation of representation. First, a definition of the fourth space will be provided. Second, a holistic view of the complex interplay of all agents involved in the reception process will be shown, with particular attention to translation itself, but also to translators, editors and readers.

While Bhabha's third space is related to identity, the fourth space is associated with interpretation and representation. The fourth space is an epistemological metaphor located in the postcolonial global imaginary, which represents a country or society with a very limited connection to or experience in a given colonial situation. Its apparent detached position should allow individuals within this fourth space to receive postcolonial texts or information for what they are worth; however, there is a tendency to adopt the former and current hegemonic powers perspective. This latter approach should be challenged to avoid labelling, stereotyping and the biased representation of a relatively unknown culture.

The increasing interest in African literature in countries such as Spain calls for an analysis of how knowledge is created through interpretation and how collective forms of representation are consolidated.

Nevertheless, readers are never impartial onlookers, and the collective representation of postcolonial literature within the fourth space will, in most cases, imbricate with their country's history. That is, as members of a given society, readers are conditioned by the time frame they live in and fully immersed in shared social and cultural values. If, for instance, we take the case of Spain, such values are those of the hegemonic forces of the first world. Hence, even if fourth space readers should approach postcolonial texts in an honest and impartial way, they actually approach them from their acquired set of values and, in a more individual perspective, from their personal experiences and ideology. This partially intertwines with Eco's idea of *open work* (1962), in which the polysemy and polyphony of the text allows the reader to interpret and thus become a co-author of the work, and is closely followed by Barthes' *death of the author* (1968), which although at a different level, places the reader at the centre of the interpretative universe.

Fourth space readers may adopt two generic standpoints to deal with representation issues, depending on which side of the initial binary opposition they identify with. It must be borne in mind that binary oppositions are not so outdated in the fourth space as there is hardly contact with the third space reality and the bulk of the population is exposed to patronising colonial discourse in media and the film industry, such as the recent motion pictures *El tiempo entre costuras* (*The Time in Between*, 2013), set in the Spanish Protectorate of Morocco, or *Palmeras en la nieve* (*Palm Trees in the Snow*, 2015), set in the former Spanish Guinea. For instance, a mainstream reader from Peru reading a novel from Zimbabwe will probably experience a stronger bond with the author's perspective. However, a reader from Spain, even at a subconscious level, might at least initially relate to a more patronising colonial approach; probably not so much because of the Spanish colonial past as a metropolis, but because of a sense of belonging to the first world.

Therefore, this new episteme of the fourth space has been timely coined as it is necessary to challenge and make a stand against this general approach. It is not only necessary to decolonise the mind of those who suffered colonial domination, but also the

mind of fourth space readers, whose representation of postcolonial subjects reverts “in the co-construction of identities” (Howarth, 2002: 159) of their fellow citizens, and of all agents who take part in the reception process of cultural products.

The proper interpretation of postcolonial literature can be a starting point to help mainstream readers develop a global understanding of a different reality with which they have not had significant contact. As Preziuso (2010: 157) stated, we aim “to assist literature, with the function that results from its combination of politics and poetics, reading pleasure and instigation to material change, to reclaim its locus as the most imaginative and productive places in which to be”.

In terms of literary works as cultural products “being consumed in transnational cultural markets” (Preziuso, 2010: 145), various agents intervene in the hermeneutics of postcolonial texts before presenting them to the potential reader. Translators are key agents in this process as their interpretation will greatly condition the final representation created by the reader.

### 3.1. THE ROLE OF THE TRANSLATOR

The cultural turn in translation studies, which was put forward in 1990 by Bassnett and Lefevere and is closely related to sociology and psychology, involved a thorough revision of translation praxis. The idea of translating as mere transcoding was out of the question, and the currently prevailing perspective understands that “in translation another voice enters —another consciousness, another grammar, another culture— and in marketing those translations, the original narratives are uprooted from the scene of their narration” (Sabil, 2012: 181).

Nevertheless, this statement might be too generic when it comes to the translation of postcolonial texts. The postcolonial turn in literary criticism, stemming from poststructuralist theories, has much informed postcolonial translation studies by identifying the key aesthetic and political features that are inherent to this type of texts.

As Tymoczko (1998: 20) pointed out, “unlike translators, post-colonial writers are not transposing a text [...] they are transposing a culture”. Bandia (2006: 355) strongly opposed this idea, arguing that “to view post-colonial writing as mere transposing of culture and not translating of language is tantamount to viewing post-colonial writing as an anthropological exercise rather than an artistic and literary one”.

It is not only a matter of putting different cultures in dialogue with one another, but of carrying out a double translation process. In referring to the translation of African literature, Bandia stated that it “necessarily involves two levels or stages of crosscultural interpretation” (2008: 173), since the literary product is multicultural and also tends to be multilingual. The author explains that he uses:

“a two-tier approach to intercultural translation” where I consider *Euro-African writing as translation* as constituting a “primary” level and *inter-European language translation* as a “secondary” level of translation (Bandia, 1993: 61). Both levels are interconnected in that the translator of African literature from one European language into another is indirectly dealing with the vernacular language and culture already “translated” by the writer. The inter-European language translator therefore has as his or her source text a translated text, linguistically (and perhaps culturally) multi-layered, often immersed in a certain degree of intertextuality, written in a third code, an in-between code, fitting neither perfectly within traditional African discourse nor within the receiving European culture.  
(Bandia, 2006: 358)

Translators must therefore have a sound awareness of and commitment to the writer in order to transpose the distinctive features of the source text. As Tymoczko (1999: 31–32) argued:

localism is important [...] because as the world becomes increasingly globalized, it is paradoxically in the local that difference is maintained and manifest. It is increasingly on the local level that differences are articulated, negotiated, contested and defended in relation to the process of history.

It is important to bear in mind “the significance of translation as a shaping force in individual national literatures” (Bassnett, 2013: 346). Thus, and moving to the next level of specification, we will highlight certain features that tend to be present in postcolonial literature and subsequently condition its translation, such as heteroglossia, orality, hybridity, various forms of dislocation, search for identity or sociopolitical opposition to the hegemonic power structure.

Regarding heteroglossia, in most cases, we are “dealing with multilingual works that reflect a heterolingual context” (Bandia interviewed by Rodríguez Murphy, 2015). Literary heteroglossia might refer to pidgins, creoles, linguistic hybridity or code-switching as a writing technique (Bandia, 2008: 122–158) and constitutes one of the major challenges for the Western translator.

Another distinctive feature is the underlying oral component, “a kind of a subtext of the oral tradition discourses” (Bandia interviewed by Rodríguez Murphy, 2015), which enriches and hybridises the text. For Bandia (2008: 53), “[b]esides enhancing the aesthetic appeal of the African novel and highlighting its otherness, fictionalizing oral artistry results in a hybrid discourse that requires a reading-as-translation strategy, thereby calling attention to the translative nature of the postcolonial text”.

Hybridity stands as a key feature of postcolonial literature, which according to Bhabha (1990: 211) has been written in the “third code”, occurs in the “third space” and “puts together the traces of certain other meanings or discourses”. The rendering in literature of “[t]he process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation and representation”.

Concerning dislocation, it might take place under different forms, such as migration, diaspora, exile or metaphorical dislocation. This term goes hand in hand with the search for identity. According to Hall (1993: 222), identity is not so much “an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent”, but “a production, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation”.

And last, but certainly not least, is the sociopolitical opposition to the hegemonic power structure. The usually manifest subversive component of the postcolonial text is a key aspect that must be respected in the translation in order not to re-colonise the text.

Having examined the main features of postcolonial literature, we will now question the roles and requirements of the different agents involved in the reception process, focusing specifically on translators, editors or publishers and readers.

We will divide the requirements postcolonial translators must meet in two major blocks related to the Spivakian distinction of Marx’s enunciation: ethical (related to *vertreten*) and cultural and linguistic (related to *darstellen*). In line with Carbonell (1997, 28), it is essential that “la cuestión lingüística” (linguistic issue) and “la carga ideológica” (ideological baggage) be taken into account when translating this type of literature.

On the one hand, postcolonial translators must face the transposition of a text between cultures with unequal power relations. As Tymoczko (1999: 24) pinpointed: “Translation, like other forms of representation, can respond to the imposition of ‘cultural

strength’ on the part of the dominant culture and reify cultural hegemony [...], but translation can just as well be a node for nationalism or cultural assertion [...]”.

Thus, postcolonial translators must recognise as their first duty to decolonise fiction, to break the power dynamics that usually linger in the fourth space cultural imaginary. A new interpretative horizon must be provided in order not to reproduce relations of hegemony, but to recreate the authors’ interstitial cultural location. In order to do this, translators must be fully aware of the significance of power imbalance in translation practice.

The in-betweenness they are bound to re-create or co-write requires them not only to have a sound knowledge of how the historical and anthropological perspective overlap, but also to show a political awareness and social sensitivity, which will eventually lead to an ethical translation praxis. Bandia (2008: 238) also advocates the need for ethics in translation:

A translation ethics of difference is based on a degree of respect for the alterity of the local source culture, which does not imply a servile attachment to source language, but rather the avoidance of receptor language manipulation or assimilation of source language culture. This calls for a translation approach [...] guided by an ethics of translation that safeguards the specificity of the local language culture without hampering the readability of the translation.

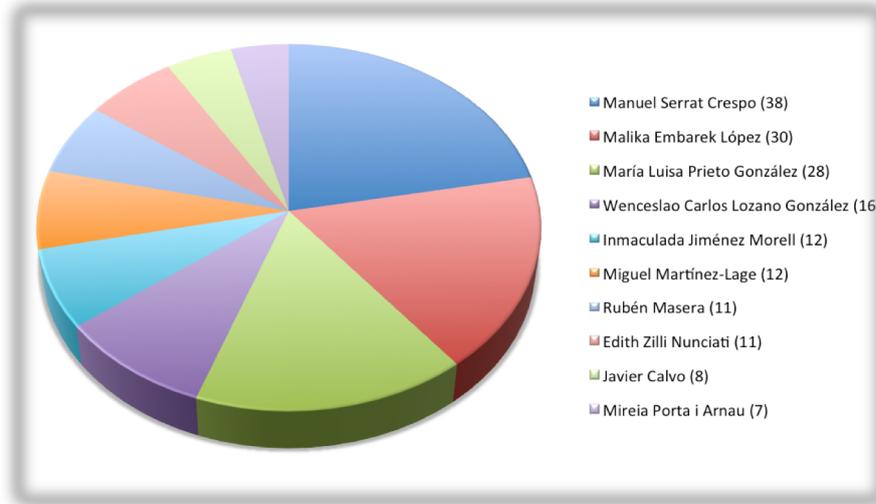
On the other hand, postcolonial translators must have in-depth knowledge of the source text context. Simpson (quoted in Bandia, 2008: 183–184) makes culture prevail over language and goes as far as to state that:

Many African writers have so localized the use of the languages of colonization by passing them through the matrix of their own cultural background that much may be lost to the uninitiated European translator whose only title to competence is that he is working into his own mother-tongue. [...] African works to be translated should at least involve the collaboration of Africans.

We find it quite provocative to imply that the only competence of an uninitiated European translator is to work into his or her mother tongue, as even inexperienced professional translators rely on an array of strategies and techniques. Akakuru and Chima (quoted in Lécivain, 2015: 257–258) also highlight the importance of this “*compétence culturelle, qui permet d’interpréter les réalités africaines, qui fait défaut à plus d’un traducteur et surtout aux traducteurs occidentaux des textes littéraires africains*” (cultural competence, which enables them to interpret African realities, which some translators lack, especially Western translators of literary African texts).

Thus, it is an essential prerequisite for translators to have exceptional documentary research skills, as it will allow them to acquire gradual expertise in the field. Nevertheless, as the fourth space is not aware of the difficulties and challenges that postcolonial translation entails, the translator’s degree of expertise is not a usual requirement when assigning a translation project. The results of BDAFRICA support this idea, as 751 out of 841 African titles recorded between 1972-2014 are translations, which have been carried out by 350 different translators. This proves that the assignment of these translations tends to be random, as 215 translators, out of those 350, have translated only one African title. It is striking that even the ten top translators of African literature do not have to their credit so many books, as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Top translators specialised in African literature (Fernández Ruiz et al., 2018: 110)**



Together with the heavy documentary work that needs to be accomplished and the gradual acquisition of expertise, we consider it desirable to avoid paratextual elements and strive to solve everything within the text by employing the available strategies and techniques. Otherwise, postcolonial authors will always struggle to earn their place in mainstream literature and such works will continue to be labelled as exotic reading. We advocate for abandoning the ethnocentric stigma attached to these ‘world literatures’.

The use of paratexts, which Genette assumes are “at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it” (1997: 1–2), when translating postcolonial literature contributes to perpetuating the stigma. The publishing industry seems to take its toll on these authors in order to publish them in the form of “prologues, prefaces, introduction, acknowledgements, indexes, footnotes, appendices and jacket covers” (Preziuso, 2010: 156). This is a decision that does not always rest well with translators, as Nord (2012) reminds us when she recalls Genette’s distinction between *authorial* and *editorial* paratexts to argue that the former “are regarded as part of the ‘source text’ and usually translated (regardless of what the publisher makes of the translation later on)”, while the latter “do not normally fall into the responsibility of translators”.

We are more accepting of paratexts such as maps or prologues, which do not interfere with the text itself, but disapprove meddling elements such as footnotes. We claim that a sound translation should suffice to help the reader understand cultural features within the text. It is important to acknowledge that the main scope of fiction is to entertain readers, not to instruct them nor provide scientific insight to the literary work. We endorse Bandia’s standpoint when he explained in an interview with Rodríguez Murphy (2015: 151) that the problem of employing paratexts is “turning African literature, African art and aesthetics, into something didactic and cumbersome that distracts from the reading experience”. In fact, the present tendency when translating a text from a dominant culture, namely in US fiction, is to avoid using paratexts to explain new cultural elements. Instead, they have been learnt gradually, as readers enter the imaginary the author has produced.

To summarise, translators must meet not only cultural and linguistic requirements, but also an ethical one, as they must be able to convey postcolonial authors’ in-betweenness, their critical discourses against power asymmetries and other controversial aspects surrounding subalternities.

### 3.2. THE ROLE OF OTHER AGENTS IN THE PUBLISHING INDUSTRY

It should be recalled that translators are only a cog in the publishing machinery, and many other agents play a more decisive role within the publication context. This context highly differs in places such as the UK, where readers have easier access to a wide array of postcolonial works published in their mother tongue, or Spain, where the mere selection of the text is crucial in shaping the African canon for Spanish readers and in many cases also Latin American readers. Indeed, the publishing industry's control over the “circuits of production, dissemination and reception” leads to “the construction of a literary Africa” (Krishnan, 2014: 2–3) for Spanish readers.

However, the ultimate criterion shaping this canon is the potential readership of the book. Bassnett and Lefevere (1998: 123) warned of:

[the] complex manipulative textual processes [that] take place: how a text is selected for translation, for example, what role the translator plays in that selection, what role an editor, publisher or patron plays, what criteria determine the strategies that will be employed by the translator, how a text might be received in the target system.

All these processes tend to be marked by the publishing house's expected economic benefits. This may lead some houses to want to appeal to mainstream audiences, or rather to keep the label of exoticism and include the book in a given collection to address another type of audience. Regarding this power of the reception market, Krishnan (2014: 3) pointed out how such power affects artistic creation as “writers in a global literary marketplace both challenge and are constrained by the conventions of representation mediating the reception of postcolonial literatures”. Thus, we face a constant bidirectional dialogue, as Meylaerts (2005: 278) also warns: “[w]hen a text circulates within a new culture, it will no longer circulate within its original context and may be given new meanings by the new field of reception”.

It is therefore in the hands of the editors to determine the representation criteria that will shape the canon. In many cases, beyond the selection of award-winning authors, these criteria have traditionally been conditioned by UK publishing trends, as García de Vinuesa (2015: 206) indicated:

Ciertamente, para los editores españoles, el concepto y el corpus de “literatura africana anglófona” no ha sido el hispanoamericano, sino el europeo y una parte del británico en particular. [...] Así pues, los editores españoles [...] conocerían a los autores [...] a través de la labor posterior de las grandes editoriales, entre las cuales había algunas editoriales africanistas “oficiales”, como es el caso de Heinemann y Longman. (Certainly, for Spanish publishers, the concept and corpus of “anglophone African literature” does not correspond with the Hispano-American, but with the European or, more precisely, the British ones. [...] Therefore, Spanish editors [...] would come to know the authors [...] through the subsequent work of the main publishing houses, among them some of the “official” Africanist houses, such as Heinemann and Longman.)

Another selection criterion might tilt the balance in favour of works which may fit into specific collections, as a distinction is made between literary genres and editorial genres, such as children's books, thrillers or biographical novels. With respect to cover designing, some editors have perpetuated an exotic label. More often than not, the image of a solitary baobab tree against an ochre backdrop has prevailed. As mentioned above, editors make a final decision on paratexts, often in spite of translators' suggestions and sometimes in a very subtle way. For instance, the band on the cover or the advertising

jargon deployed may differ from, or even contradict, the translation strategy chosen. Decisions might also be taken considering bestsellers in the target market, sometimes thanks to cinema or television—as in the case of *Palm Trees in the Snow* or *The Time in Between/The Seamstress*—to look for similar stories in a sort of feedback process.

### 3.3. THE ROLE OF READERS

The aforementioned concepts of Eco's open work (1962) or Barthes' death of the author (1968) reinforce the role of the reader as a co-writer or co-creator, as the act of reading is overtly subjective. The reader, like the translator, becomes a new interpreter of the text. Bandia (2008: 236) recalls Martindale's reflections on the reader's role: "a reader with a flexible response will be able to do his own culture-bridging as he reads [...] he will grasp for himself, that eighteenth-century and Homeric manners are in certain respects different, and quickly learn to adjust to that fact in his reading".

The epistemological truths of the Western reader have traditionally been dominated by the Western canon, which genealogically goes back to the Greco-Roman world. Reading African literature requires readers to reconceptualise their reality to avoid falling into the error of reproducing a hegemonic order. They must carry out a comparative reading that subverts and restructures the meaning of the established world order. From this new space for dialogue, a new awareness of global spaces would be created and readers would assume a more active role in meaning construction. Therefore, interpreting would not merely be reduced to an aesthetic or poetic reading, but a sociopolitical one, which enables moving towards a more accurate representation of African reality.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

We have coined the new episteme of fourth space, and exemplified it through a case study of the reception of African literature in Spain. However, many strands of this approach remain to be developed in the country at a time when hybridity representation is at a high point. Representation provides the social scaffolding for individual identity construction in a society with little connection with the binary opposition at issue in this type of literature. Thus, literature in this context assumes a transformative role and translation becomes a decolonising tool, contributing to the creation of unbiased knowledge based on an ethical interpretation of the original text.

This research seeks to achieve a social impact by provoking discussion in Postcolonial Translation Studies, and to make a difference in the sociology of reception by shifting from analysing inside the books to their relationship with the outside. It is crucial for social sciences and humanities to challenge the fact that the fourth space tends to make its own the imaginary spaces established by the hegemonic forces. Therefore, this new episteme is not only applicable to manifold disciplines—as it transcends literature—but is also exportable to other imperialistic contexts. We consider it imperative to adopt the fourth space standpoint to overcome the attitudes inherited from external hegemonic powers and thereby foster potential avenues for interdisciplinary research.

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