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# **Accommodating the *third space* in a *fourth society*: BDAFRICA, a groundbreaking source for the analysis of African literature reception in Spain**

## **ABSTRACT**

*Inherent features of African postcolonial literature have hampered reception quantification, which is even more often neglected in countries with limited experience of African decolonization processes. This has been exemplified through the Spanish case, where there was no quantitative data available to report on current reception trends. Hence, by exploiting the BDAFRICA database, a relevant specialized bibliographical research tool, we have provided an unparalleled study that covers 42 years of African literature reception in Spain (1972–2014). The methods described in this paper are descriptive. Quantitative information that is subject to a descriptive analysis has been selected from BDAFRICA. The results provide clear evidence of the sustained increase in the production of African fiction books and offer academia unparalleled data, thereby opening the door to manifold research lines.*

## **KEYWORDS**

bibliographical  
database  
BDAFRICA  
descriptive statistics  
book market reception  
African postcolonial  
literature  
postcolonial translation

1. In the survey *Attitudes Towards Immigration* of the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (Centre for Sociological Research) in 2015, it was found that 62 per cent of the people questioned considered that the number of immigrants in Spain is *high* or *excessive*. Likewise, 29,6 per cent considered immigration, in general terms, as *negative* or *very negative* ([http://www.cis.es/cis/opencm/ES/1\\_encuestas/estudios/ver.jsp?estudio=14249](http://www.cis.es/cis/opencm/ES/1_encuestas/estudios/ver.jsp?estudio=14249)). In the same vein, the study *Profiles of Discrimination in Spain* from the CIS in 2014 indicates that 49,1 per cent of foreigners report having been victims of discrimination throughout their lives ([https://www.mssi.gob.es/ssi/igualdad-Oportunidades/noDiscriminacion/documentos/Perfiles\\_discriminacion.pdf](https://www.mssi.gob.es/ssi/igualdad-Oportunidades/noDiscriminacion/documentos/Perfiles_discriminacion.pdf)).

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

Postcolonial literature itself is a battleground in which the active pursuit of decolonization continues to be played out.

(Edwards 2008: 30)

## INTRODUCTION

African literature underwent considerable growth in terms of production in the second half of the twentieth century (Owomoyela 1993; Valero et al. 2004), echoing in the former British and French metropolitan spheres of influence. A close intertwining between historical context and written fiction is almost inevitable. However, a country such as Spain, which has only experienced African colonialism tangentially, has remained oblivious to the cultural expressions produced in the context of the main decolonization processes. Collective thinking validates the imperialist mindset of its neighbouring countries and whenever individuals' moral and cultural colonization is called into question, it is carried out from a patronizing perspective and a tacit approval of stereotypes.<sup>1</sup>

Western political, cultural and moral primacy was challenged on the one hand by poststructuralism, which first raised the need for different epistemological principles in order to solve representation issues, and on the other hand by postcolonial studies. In this regard, the *third space* is a concept developed by Bhabha (1994) that stems from poststructuralist interpretations of space. According to Bhabha, the third space is a space 'in-between the designations of identity' and 'this interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy' (1994: 4).

Taking this theory further, Fernández-Ruiz et al. (forthcoming) have developed the new episteme of the *fourth space*:

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, that represents a country or society with very limited connection or experience on a given colonial situation.

Thus, we will use the term *fourth society* to address a society with no immediate connection to the specific colonization or decolonization processes of an author's country of origin. For instance, Spain would be a fourth society when it comes to the reception of books penned by Zimbabwean writers, such as Dambudzo Marechera or Yvonne Vera.

Although postcolonial studies have received just a timid acknowledgement in countries with no direct connection to the major decolonization processes – with some notable exceptions, such as the United States, which has greatly contributed to postcolonial theory – the unstoppable growth of African titles published in Spain and the impact of immigration phenomena require a rethinking of the representation of the 'other'. According to data provided by INEbase,<sup>2</sup> the Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas (Spanish National Statistics Institute) database, the number of foreign nationals in Spain increased by 533 per cent between 2000 and 2014. The inflow of African migrants – 18.95 per cent of the total immigrant population (INEbase, 2006) – has generated growing cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. These sociocultural consequences

are a turning point for Spanish society in terms of handling and truly understanding postcolonial cultural expressions.

As far as literature is concerned, a fair amount of studies produced by Spanish academia have addressed African literature (García Ramírez 1999; Miampika 2003; Díaz Narbona 2007), postcolonial translation (Álvarez and Vidal 1996, Vidal 2007; Carbonell 1997) or, more specifically, the selection of African texts for publication and translation practice (Gómez Camarero 1994; Fernández Parrilla 1997; Amo Hernández and Gómez Camarero 1998; Martín Ruano 2004; Valero et al. 2004, 2005; Zarandona Fernández 2007; Naupert 2013; Rodríguez Murphy 2014; García de Vinuesa 2015).

The fact that in 2007 the 66th Madrid Book Fair focused on Africa and that Nobel laureate writers became bestselling authors demonstrated the upward trend regarding the reception of African literature in Spain, resulting in the advent of specialized publishing houses in the country, such as Ediciones del Bronce (1996), El Cobre (2002) and Zanzibar (2002).

Nonetheless, the aforementioned studies have rarely adopted a quantitative approach to the impact of African literature in Spain. Valero et al. (2004) claim that up to 1990 'la bibliografía existente de literatura africana, en cualquiera de sus lenguas, no llegaba a la treintena de títulos' ('the existing body of African literature, in any language, barely reached 30 titles') and that in 2004 'en el caso de obras literarias de países africanos traducidas, los títulos publicados hasta ahora son casi un centenar' ('in the case of translated literary works from African countries, the titles published so far number almost 100'). Vidal stated in 1997 that 'en lengua castellana están disponibles un par de centenares de traducciones, repartidos en media docena larga de editoriales' ('around 200 translations are available in Spanish, published by more than half a dozen publishing houses'). It must however be pointed out that Vidal refers to postcolonial writers in general, not only African, as some of the authors he mentions are American (Toni Morrison) or Bangladeshi (Taslima Nasrin). However, none of these studies describes the methodology used nor what criteria were set out in order to give the figures provided.

Therefore, it can be stated that the existing sources offer a highly valuable picture of the current state of African literature in Spain; however, in quantitative terms, they are incomplete and biased. The prime difficulty here lies in the fact that institutional book catalogues register the source language of the published titles, but not the authors' country of origin. Due to the fact that the authors' country of origin is not specified, there is no evidence of a repository, catalogue or database that logs all African titles published in Spain.

The lack of such data hampers the development of accurate studies on postcolonial literature reception. In such circumstances, the authors of the present study, Fernández-Ruiz et al. (2016) designed and implemented the database BDAFRICA in 2015 (the open-access database is available at [www.bdafrica.eu](http://www.bdafrica.eu)), which comprises all titles from African-born authors published in Spanish in Spain between 1972 (when Spain first joined the ISBN system) and 2014.

This database allows the extraction of unprecedented data. Returning to the figures provided by Valero et al. (2004), in fact the figures revealed by BDAFRICA show that between 1972 and 1990 a total of 91 titles had already been published, and between 1972 and 2004 the figure rose to 505, of which 477 were translations. Regarding the data provided by Vidal (1997), only from Africa, and excluding the rest of the postcolonial literary world, there were already 211 titles translated between 1972 and 1997.

## BDAFRICA AND METHODOLOGY

In Spain, the newly developed postcolonial studies have undergone a slow, but steady, growth. There has been a significant impact and evolution in the field, in spite of the fact that the quantitative data handled, as mentioned above, has always been vague or imprecise. However, researchers are not to blame, since the problem lies in the inherent features of the subject of study. García Ramírez (1999) highlights the complexity of setting up a typology of African literature (pp. 34–38) and notes that the literary evolution of each country is heterogeneous and uneven (p. 18). Nonetheless, she also points out that for practical reasons, there is a tendency to consider Africa as a whole when carrying out the research, in spite of the fact that ‘cada área geográfica y lingüística, cada estado y cada etnia presenta su propia trayectoria específica’ (‘each linguistic and geographical area, each state and each ethnicity has its own specific trajectory’) (1999: 25).

This thorny issue cannot prevent the progress of postcolonial literature research in Spain and the need to know, through reliable data, how the African canon offered to Spanish readers is being shaped has become impending. Lécivain (2015: 237) underlines ‘la dificultad de establecer un corpus de partida debido a la compleja adscripción de los autores a una literatura denominada “africana” y el creciente multiposicionamiento de los autores en más de un sistema literario’ (‘the difficulty of establishing a baseline corpus due to the complexity of attaching the authors to a so-called African literature and to the growing multialignment of writers in more than one literary system’).

Thus, once we have accepted that no design criteria are going to please every typology proposed – such as including diaspora writers, second-generation African writers or solely comprising counter-colonial texts (all of which are equally valid and justifiable) – specific criteria (Table 1) have been established in order to offer solid and reliable results. Although a comprehensive, detailed and justified explanation is available from Fernández-Ruiz et al. (2016), Table 1 shows a deliberately simplified, yet complete, outline that reflects the design criteria that have determined BDAFRICA’s compilation protocol.

Table 1 summarizes the selected design criteria for the database. BDAFRICA has compiled fiction works – as long as they are monographs by a

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<b>BDAFRICA Design Criteria</b>	
<b>Diachronic</b>	1972–2014
<b>Diatopic</b>	African-born
<b>Source language</b>	Any
<b>Target language</b>	European Spanish
<b>Format</b>	Any (hard/digital copy)
<b>Availability</b>	Any (available/out of print)
<b>Editions</b>	Same translator, same publishing house: recorded as one entry Same translator, different publishing house: recorded as two entries
<b>Document typology</b>	Fiction Single-author monographs

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*Table 1: Design criteria: diasystematic limitations and document typology.*

single author – by African-born writers, which were published in Spain and in Spanish between 1972 (when Spain joined the ISBN system) and 2014. There are no restrictions regarding the source language of the books, their format or their availability. As for editions, reprints with the same translator for the same publishing house are recorded as one entry in the database; however, if a second publishing house reuses the translation, it is recorded as two entries.

Once the design criteria were determined, a compilation protocol was drawn up. It was divided into four steps: data collection, storage, statistical processing and online dissemination. Data were collected from a wide array of sources: academic sources (Gómez Camarero 1994; Martínez Montávez 1994; Fernández Parrilla 1997; Amo and Gómez Camarero 1998; Miampika 2003; Valero et al. 2004, 2005; Naupert 2013); databases that were useful, although somewhat biased (for instance, the Biblioteca Africana de la Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes); specialized institutions (such as Casa África, Fundación Sur or Fundación Tres Culturas); specialized blogs (Literafricanas, Wiriko, Afribuku); and publishing houses (for example, Ediciones del Bronce o El Cobre). Although these sources may be limited on their own, each provided a list of titles that could be used to draw up a more comprehensive list. Thereafter, each single register was validated in the Spanish ISBN Agency database – run by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport – before being incorporated into an Excel spreadsheet and then exported to two database management systems: Access (to facilitate statistical processing) and MySQL (to make the data available online). This is a highly abbreviated description of the protocol applied. A complete explanation is available in Fernández-Ruiz et al. (2016).

BDAFRICA offers quantitative data; this study reports and analyses the statistical data that this bibliographical research tool provides through a descriptive approach. The overarching aim of this research is to provide a complete picture of the data in order to demonstrate the reception of African literature in Spain over 42 years (1972–2014). For this purpose, data has been displayed and summarized in a meaningful way in order to observe and describe patterns that might emerge from the statistics. Also in relation to the graphic representation of the data, a synchronic approach has been prevalent with very few exceptions, such as the diachronic approach used in Figure 2.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This statistical treatment of literary works by African authors published in Spanish in Spain is original and unparalleled, with the ultimate aim of offering a much-needed overview that will help to identify where these works stand within the Spanish publishing market.

Figure 1 shows the BDAFRICA search interface, where searches may be run by indicating a descriptor (namely title, author, country of origin, gender, translator, source language, publishing house and/or year of publication) in the boxes provided. The searches provide the qualitative data that is displayed in the subsequent figures.

Even though the statistics presented in this paper are of a descriptive nature and mostly using a univariate approach, the BDAFRICA database offers bivariate or multivariate potential of an interdisciplinary nature to serve the interests of studies in different fields; that is, postcolonial studies, translation studies, sociology, anthropology or philological studies, among others.

The results obtained allow conclusions to be reached regarding in particular the fluctuation of the volume of African authors' publications in Spain, the



Figure 1: BDAFRICA search interface (Fernández-Ruiz et al. 2016).

most-published authors, the most common translated languages, translators with a higher degree of specialization in translating African postcolonial literature, writers' gender, publishing house or the percentage of publications regarding country of origin.

The most noticeable data at a glance is the volume in terms of titles published, which amounts to 841, and the number of writers that have been published, which rises to 203 – both exact figures that were hitherto unknown. Due to space constraints, just one set of examples of the multiple results that can be obtained from BDAFRICA ([www.bdafrica.eu](http://www.bdafrica.eu)) will be presented in this paper.

The first query to the database refers to the time trends in the analysis of the titles output over the 1972–2014 period. Figure 2 depicts a line chart showing a positive evolution over the last decades.

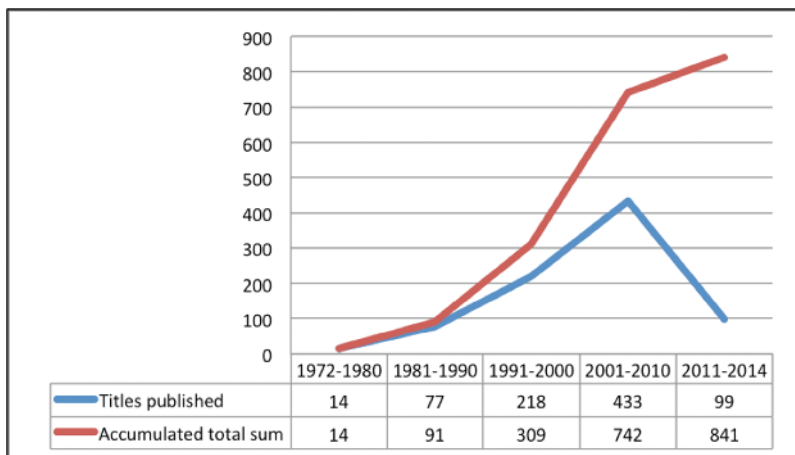


Figure 2: Evolution of African literature within the Spanish book market and titles published by decade.

It can be noted that between 1986 and 2003 there was a clear growth trend, which is in line with the Nobel Prize being awarded to Wole Soyinka (1986), Nayib Mahfuz (1988), Nadine Gordimer (1991) and John Maxwell Coetzee (2003); and, to a lesser extent, those awarded with the Booker Prize: Nadine Gordimer (1974), John Maxwell Coetzee (1983, 1999) and Ben Okri (1991). It is worth noting that 22 of the titles published in 2002 were penned by J. R. R. Tolkien, following the worldwide success of the first release of *The Lord of the Rings* (Jackson, 2001) film trilogy. By contrast, the high values shown between 2006 and 2009 do not reflect the success of particular authors; conversely, the wide array of writers published within this period reveals an increasing interest in African literature in general, probably due to the fact that over this period there was an increase in the number of African immigrants arriving by *patera* ('small boat') in Spain, and this was a topical issue in the Spanish media and Spanish society in general.

Figure 2 also allows us to compare the number of book titles published per decade. The fact that the first and last decades do not reflect the total decade figures must be taken into consideration. The reason is that the temporal criteria set establishes the timespan for the study from 1972, when Spain joined the ISBN system, until 2014. Decree 2984/1972 (4 November 1972) required publishers to provide an ISBN. However, consistent enforcement in the first year of its application does not seem likely. Therefore, irregularities may have occurred, as not all titles published in those first years have an ISBN.

Figure 3 shows a pie chart of the published authors' percentages. Once again, it can be confirmed that prizes awarded are a determining factor when it comes to publishing criteria. It is significant that the three of the five most-published writers are endorsed by the Nobel Prize. However, it is particularly noticeable that Wole Soyinka is not ranked among the top-published authors.

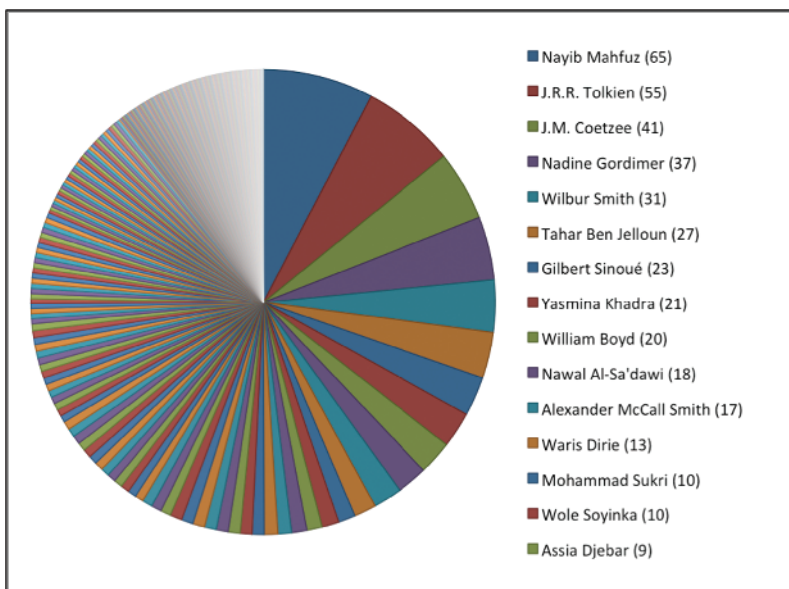


Figure 3: Numbers of books published by African writers.



The Nigerian Nobel Prize winner (1986) is too often ostracized by major English repositories and anthologies, such as *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (Abrams and Greenblatt 2000) or *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature* (Marcus and Nicholls 2004), which do not even mention him when acknowledging the African canon.

On a separate issue, and under an anthropological lens, it is noteworthy that six of the top fifteen most-published authors are of European descent, namely J. R. R. Tolkien (South Africa), John Maxwell Coetzee (South Africa), Nadine Gordimer (South Africa), Wilbur Smith (Zambia), William Boyd (Ghana) and Alexander McCall Smith (Zimbabwe). Zarandona (forthcoming) emphasizes the importance of the race factor in the literary reception of South African writers in Spain:

The race factor that used to determine the fortunes of South African (wo)men of letters, still seems to have a great impact not only within the South African nation, but also when the nation's literature gets translated into other languages, such as Spanish, and becomes part of circulated world literature.

This claim about South Africa may also be applicable to other countries in Africa.

The inclusion of J. R. R. Tolkien in BDAFRICA is the result of applying the established design criteria in order to implement a complete and reliable database. The inclusion of exclusively African-born writers (cf. the methodology section) allows the data to be exact, objective and reliable. Otherwise, famous cases such as Doris Lessing would have certainly been included, but it would have been unfeasible to delineate different degrees of African relatedness or involvement; the interpretation of the researchers who conceived the database would have played a highly determining role in the authors' validation process. Outliers such Tolkien's works (55) or William Boyd's works (20) are at the same time legitimate data and extreme observations, as they do not model the intended results to be obtained from BDAFRICA.

Therefore, this data must always be interpreted bearing in mind that being African born was a design criterion, but the influence of their country of origin on these writers varies greatly from one to another. Even when this influence seems more evident, Bhabha's (1994) enunciation of the finality of the state and the liminality of the people must be taken into account:

What is politically significant is the effect of this finality of the state on the liminality of the representation of the people. The people will no longer be contained in that national discourse of the teleology of progress; the anonymity of individuals; the spatial horizontality of community; the homogeneous time of social narratives; [...] The finitude of the nation emphasizes the impossibility of such an expressive totality with its alliance between an immanent, plenitudinous present and the eternal visibility of a past. The liminality of the people – their double inscription as pedagogical objects and performative subjects – demands a 'time' of narrative that is disavowed in the discourse of historicism where narrative is only the agency of the event, or the medium of a naturalistic continuity of Community or Tradition.

(p. 302)



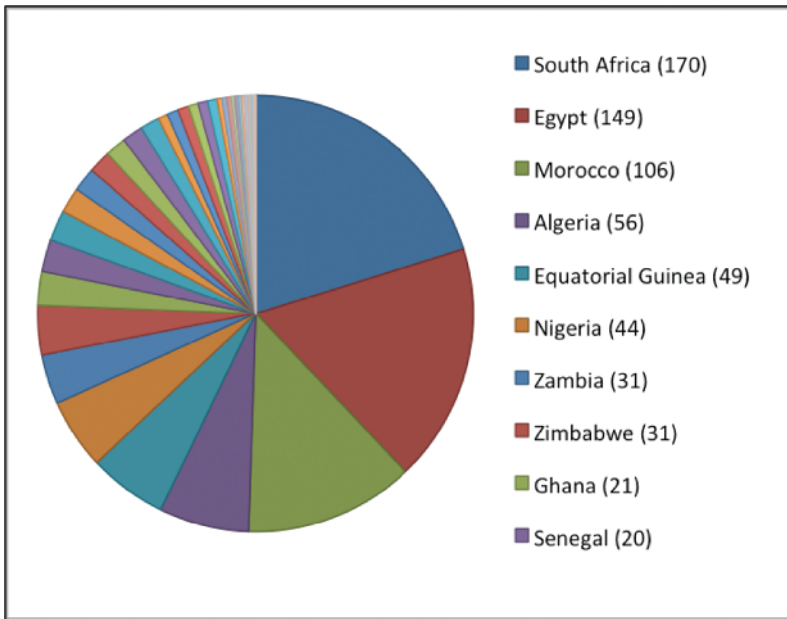


Figure 4: Titles published per country.

Therefore, this liminal space that Bhabha proposes is a third space where hybridity manifests. The degree of hybridity of each author or, more specifically, each literary work must be examined in its own context.

Figure 4 displays a pie chart where book titles published according to the authors' country of origin can be observed. It can be clearly seen that around 50 per cent of titles come from South Africa, Egypt and Morocco.

Regarding South Africa, twenty different writers' works have been translated; however, 78.23 per cent of the titles published were penned by cult writer J. R. R. Tolkien (55) and Nobel Prize winners J. M. Coetzee (41) and Nadine Gordimer (37). It is worth noting that only 4.70 per cent are books written by black authors (Nelson Mandela, Bessie Head, Nicholas Mhlongo, Peter Abrahams and Zakes Mda). In the case of Egypt, although 21 different writers have been published, 3 authors provide the bulk of a total of 149 titles. Nobel Prize winner Nayib Mahfuz ranks first with 65 titles, followed at some distance by Gilbert Sinoué with 23 and Nawal Al-Sa'dawi with 18. Altogether, these three writers make up 71.14 per cent of known Egyptian literature in Spain. With regard to Morocco, 27 out of a total of 106 titles were written by Prix Goncourt winner Tahar Ben Jelloun. This country provides the widest array of authors, as 34 Moroccan writers have made their voices heard in the Spanish book market. The figures show a broad gap between male (29) and female (5) writers. This is a regrettably recurring situation in most African countries, since gender literacy parity and social inclusion are still far from being achieved (*UNESCO eAtlas of Gender Inequality in Education 2015*).<sup>3</sup>

Taking this into account, gender-sensitive statistics were produced thanks to the data provided by BDAFRICA. Figure 5 shows significant, though unfortunately unsurprising, gender differences in global terms: 21 per cent of published authors are women and 79 per cent are men. Also, the highly

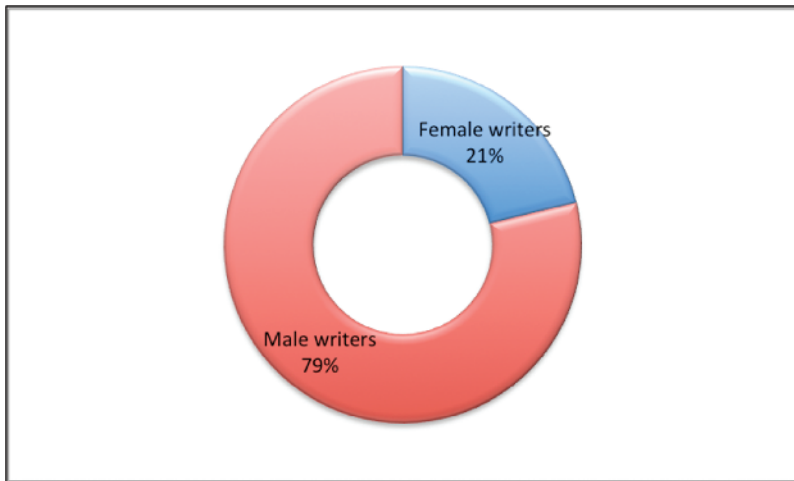


Figure 5: Percentage of female and male writers published.

influential Oxford University Press postcolonial series, *Three Crowns* (1962–1976), had a ‘distinct gender-bias [...]’: only two of the 23 authors published in the series were women: Benson and Kimenye, both of whom were regarded as rather second-rate within the series’ (Davis 2013: 110).

Interestingly enough, these percentages almost overlap with the data presented in Figure 3, which showed the top 15 most-published authors. Only 4 of them (26 per cent) were women, namely Nadine Gordimer (South Africa), Nawal Al-Sa’dawi (Egypt), Waris Dirie (Somalia) and Assia Djebar (Argelia).

Thus, postcolonial women writers suffered intersectional discrimination long before Crenshaw (1989) coined the term: the highest intersectional discrimination, linked to ageing studies, was suffered by older female writers, as described here by García de Vinuesa (2015):

[...] la motivación comercial no ha estado ausente de las políticas editoriales africanistas [...]: cualquier autora africana relativamente joven y comunicativa – capaz de vender su producto en presentaciones de libros y actos culturales apoyados por estas editoriales – era preferible a otras autoras más ancianas, en ocasiones más necesarias para el lector genuinamente interesado.

(p. 206)

([...] commercial motives have been clearly evident in Africanist editorial policies [...]: any communicative and relatively young female writer, able to sell her product at book launches and cultural events supported by those publishing houses, was preferable to elderly authors, which have proven to be more valuable for the genuinely interested reader.)

In this respect, it also seems pertinent to disaggregate the results by country. Figure 6 shows a gender-sensitive display of writers published per country. As can be observed, more male authors get published in Spain from every country except Benin, Mauritius, Somalia and Zimbabwe. Full parity can be found in the cases of Cameroon and Ghana.

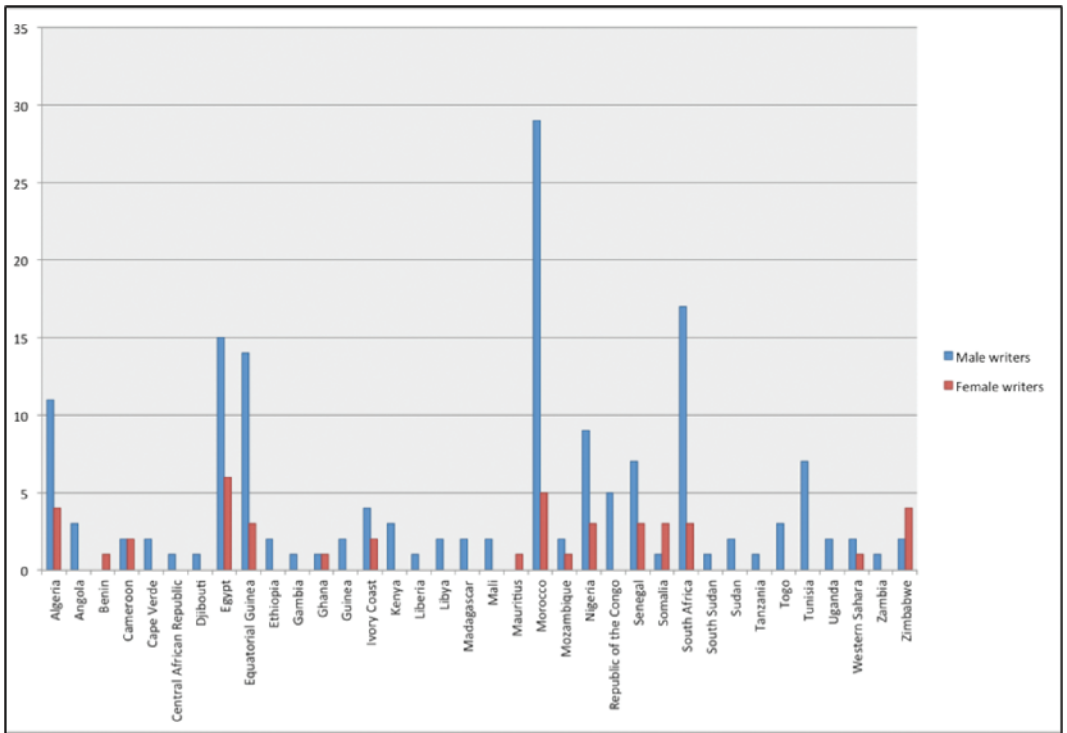


Figure 6: Gender-sensitive display of writers published per country.

It is important to acknowledge that these nationalities do not have a direct language–country relationship. Figure 7 shows the number of writers published according to the language in which they write. There have not been many titles published in different languages by the same author, as could have easily been the case with writers such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o and his followers, due to the eternal dilemma of postcolonial writers who

are caught in a dramatic structural contradiction that forces them to choose between translation into a literary language that cuts them off from their compatriots, but that gives them literary existence, and retreat into a small language that condemns them to invisibility or else to a purely national literary existence.

(Casanova 2004: 257)

The only exception is Beninese author Agnès Agboton Adigoun, for which BDAFRICA incorporates titles whose source languages are Gun, Spanish and Catalan. Unfortunately, BDAFRICA confirms the ‘small size of the audience for vernacular language creative writing’ (Lovesey 2016: 60), as only two works were originally written in vernacular languages: Gun (Agnès Agboton Adigoun) and Afrikaans (Christiaan Maurits van den Heever). It is also interesting to find two authors writing in Catalan: Beninese Agnès Agboton Adigoun and Moroccan Najat El Hachmi, both residing in Barcelona.

4. The publishers of this edition show such unawareness of the significance of this piece of work that even the title held by the author, *Sheikh*, is left in Italian (*Sceicco Nefzaoui*) instead of translating it into Spanish (*Jeque Nefzawi*).

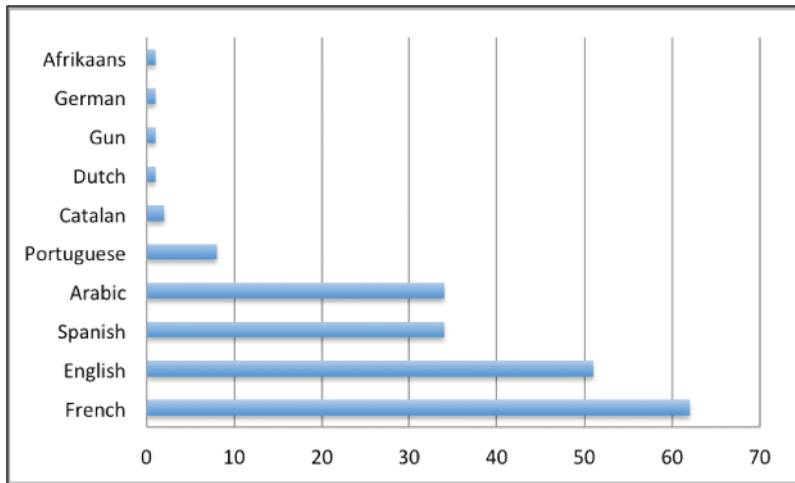


Figure 7: Number of writers published according to source language.

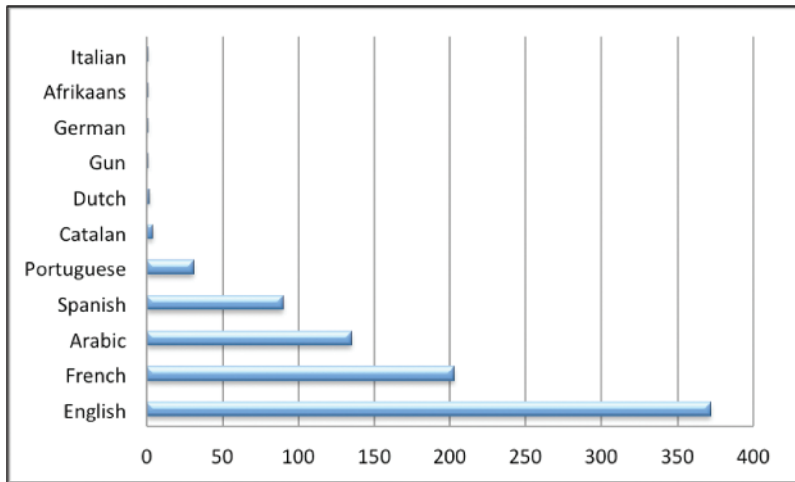


Figure 8: Number of titles published according to the source language.

The comparison of Figures 7 and 8 provides unexpected results. The latter shows the number of titles published according to the text source language. What first stands out when comparing these figures is the presence of an Italian title in Figure 8, while Figure 7 did not show any author writing in this language. This refers to a translation of *The Perfumed Garden* by Sheikh – also spelled Cheikh or Shaykh in different editions – Nefzawi. Although some translations of *The Perfumed Garden*, a fifteenth-century Arabic work of erotic literature, were rendered into Spanish via the English translation performed in 1886 by explorer Sir Richard Francis Burton, one of the many translations into Spanish was carried out from the Italian version in 1977 and edited as erotic pulp fiction.<sup>4</sup> This is one of the very few cases of indirect translation that can be found in BDAFRICA. The database includes 751 translations (out of 841 titles), of which 30 are indirect translations from works by four

different authors, one from Tunisia and three from Egypt. Curiously, all of them are based on a translated version of an original text in Arabic. First of all, BDAFRICA includes 8 books by Sheikh Nefzawi, of which four are indirect translations (one from French, three from English and one from Italian). Then, Nawal Al-Sádawi has sixteen titles (out of eighteen) indirectly translated from English. After that, Nobel Prize winner Nayib Mahfuz has eight translations from English (his other 57 entries in the database are directly translated from Arabic). And finally, the results provided by BDAFRICA for Gamal El Ghitany show that one of his books has been indirectly translated from French, while the other two have been directly translated from Arabic. All in all, the fact that there are only 30 indirect translations out of the 751 translations included in the database demonstrates that most publishing houses are aware of the importance of translating directly from the source language.

On the basis of this data, it can be concluded that although there is a wider variety of authors translated from French (cf. Figure 7), those who write in English have more titles published. This conclusion would also be reached even without the inclusion of the figures provided by Tolkien and Boyd's works. It must be remembered that most African Nobel laureates write in English and that other important literary prizes can likewise influence the repertoire offered by English-language publishers (Sapiro 2016). And once a work is translated into a more central, stronger language, it is easier for it to get translated into other languages.

Besides, we should also remember, as García de Vinuesa points out, that the selection of authors in the Spanish book market has been strongly determined by English-language book market tendencies:

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. (2015: 206)

Certainly, for Spanish editors, the concept and body of 'English-speaking African literature' does not correspond with the Hispanic American one, but with the European one and particularly the British one. [...] Therefore, Spanish editors [...] would get to know the authors [...] through the subsequent work of the major publishing houses, among which were some of the 'official' Africanist publishing houses, such as Heinemann and Longman.

Thus, it could be argued that collections such as Heinemann and Longman's African Writers series may have played a decisive role in the dissemination of African writing. Subsequently, they contributed to establishing a biased canon all over the world, since they established what was to be considered an African classic.

BDAFRICA permits us to extract further information relevant to both translation studies and the publishing industry. Figure 9 highlights the top translators with a higher specialization in African literature translation in Spain. It is worth noting that the number of works translated by each of them is relatively low in light of the total number of titles translated (751).

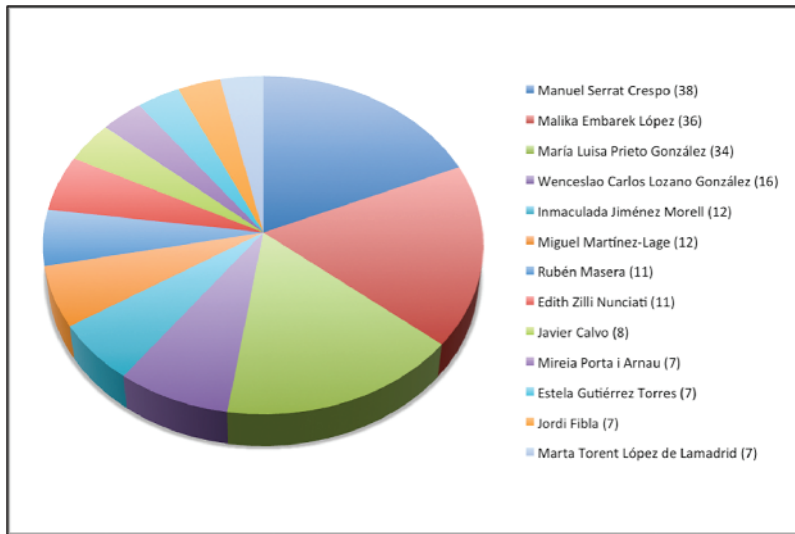


Figure 9: Top translators specialized in African literature.

This wide variety reflects the general lack of awareness within the specialized sector of the challenges that this type of translation entails, namely ethical, cultural and linguistic (Carbonell 1997; Bandia 2008; Fernández-Ruiz et al. forthcoming). BDFRICA includes 751 translations (out of 841 titles) that have been performed by 350 different translators, but 215 translators have carried out one single translation. We can infer from this that publishing houses too often disregard the mastery of translation strategies and techniques required and that these projects are frequently assigned to professionals who lack the necessary expertise.

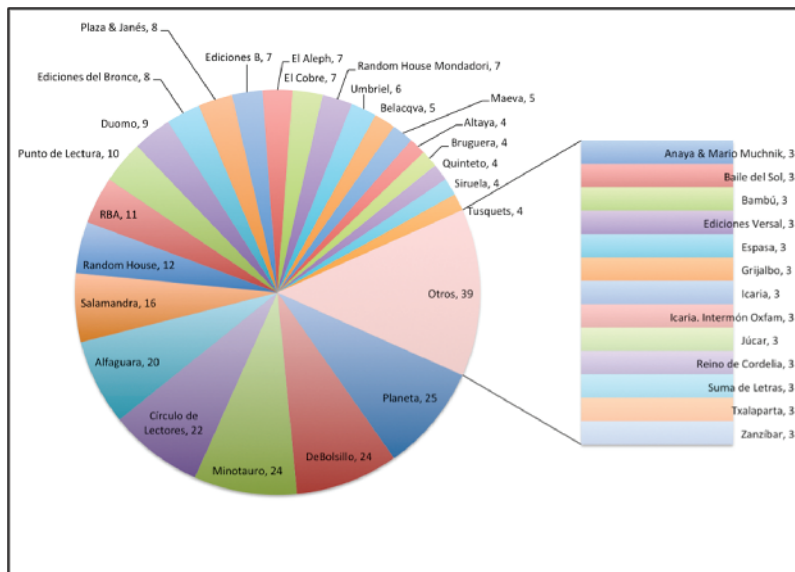


Figure 10: African titles published per publishing house.

Figure 10 shows the titles produced by different publishing houses. It can easily be noted that no publishing company stands out prominently from the rest. On the one hand, this may be interpreted as an encouraging sign for the promotion and growth of African literature, as it proves that most publishing houses are willing to edit these titles as long as they find they are worth publishing or they seem to be profitable enough. Figure 10 also makes clear that there is not a monopoly in the publishing industry of African literature in Spain; and if there is no monopoly, diversity will tend to be greater.

On the other hand, specialization tends to guarantee a certain quality level. However, as can be appreciated from Figure 10, the top two companies displayed (Círculo de Lectores and Planeta) are major publishing houses, and the one that follows (El Cobre) is a short-lived, specialized company that did not manage to publish a significant number of African books.

African literary reality will not be truly known as long as the production instruments, such as publishing companies or scientific literature, are not exercised by Africans themselves and the former colonial powers decide what is published around the globe, either following their own aesthetic values or continuing to sell the product as exotic literature, ignoring the 'validation of African aesthetic values' (Ojaide 2009: 1).

Figure 11 shows at a glance the numbers of writers who have had their books published in Spain according to their country of origin. The map

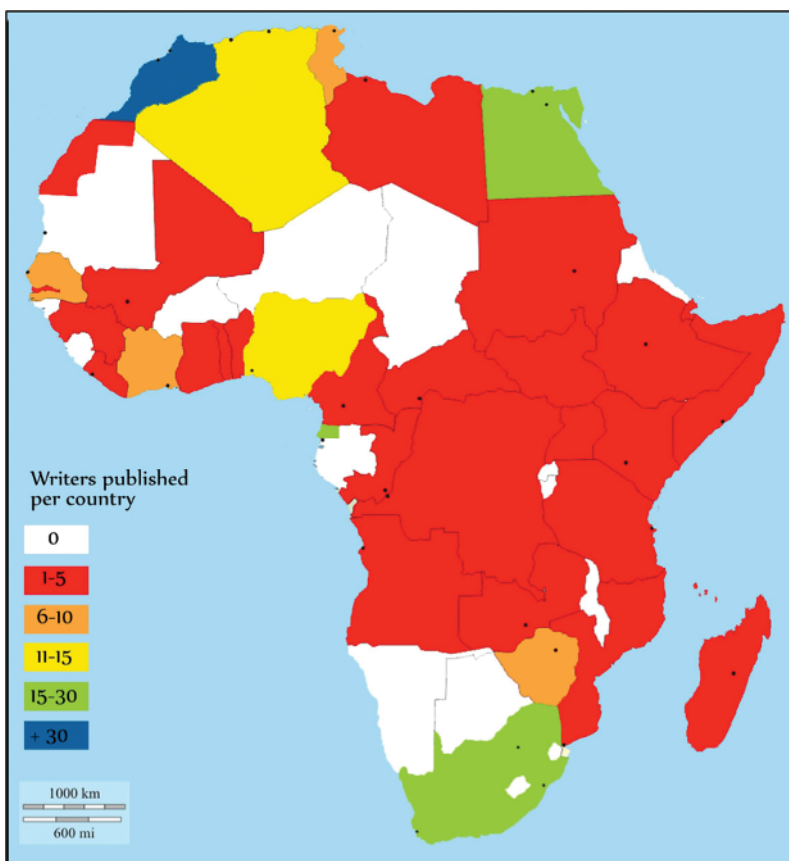


Figure 11: Writers published per country (1972–2014).



displays a severe imbalance in the reception of national literatures. Those countries that have remained silenced for the Spanish reader can be easily identified, allowing both publishing houses and academia to play a proactive role by putting them in the spotlight.

Thus, this unprecedented data is extremely useful not only for scholars, but also for all the agents within the book market, such as publishers themselves or translators who would like to submit a translation proposal. The data can also help map existing geocultural gaps in terms of the repertoire of authors, texts and cultures to be imported.

## CONCLUSIONS

The complexities of the third space are still difficult to understand in countries that once acted as the metropolis of certain colonies. Fortunately, literature is a valuable gateway to understanding postcolonial reality. However, for those countries that did not take part in a specific colonization process – which we have named the fourth space – this reality becomes even more distant and representation plays an even more important role here. Therefore, it is essential to know the canon of African literature that is being shaped in countries that had little intervention in African colonization and decolonization processes, such as Italy or Spain. We have focused on the latter to exemplify that the publishing of African titles was very much influenced by the English-language book market and literary prizes, and now it is making considerable efforts to rescue indispensable pieces of work and take a chance on contemporary authors.

In order to prove this, the BDAFRICA database was designed and implemented, and this has provided unprecedented and unparalleled quantitative data regarding the reception of African literature in Spain. This mainly quantitative and descriptive study opens up a series of lines of interpretation. Considerations have primarily been made from a synchronic perspective. However, a diachronic overview has been offered by showing the results per decade (cf. Figure 2) and further analysis could certainly be carried out.

As to the limitations of this study, it only covers the results provided by BDAFRICA for the period between 1972 and 2014. This may be a drawback, but it is worth noting that literary works published in Spain beyond 2014 are being constantly incorporated in the database. However, these records are manually added and the sources that feed the database are not always updated and available.

In terms of future research directions, the database will continue to be updated, since BDAFRICA is flexible enough to provide accurate representations of multiple data, opening up new frontiers for postcolonial research. For instance, replicas of Figure 11 could be devised isolating ranges of time to show global data differently or, by combining colour coding and 3D map distortion or extrusion, to show data based on female/male differences or the source language used. Another example of its potential would be the representation of a detailed analysis of those countries whose authors write in more than one language (such as Morocco, Benin or South Africa) and which percentage from each language has been published in Spain. Moreover, English and French production could be compared by two mirroring maps. Another possibility that arises is to measure the consistency of authors over time, namely whether their books have been published regularly, and this will allow us to evaluate their occasional movement in or out of the canon.

Writers could be then categorized as strong or weak stratification authors (Borrero Zapata 2004: 264) according to recurrence, which allows us to assign them a higher or lower canonicity rate according to quantitative criteria. Furthermore, BDAFRICA permits us to go beyond reception itself, enabling us to analyze in more depth the relationship between countries that write in the same language.

BDAFRICA provides unprecedented and much-needed data that shows the canon of African literature that is being formed within the Spanish historiographical perspective. It allows us to analyse the perception of African national literatures and the relationships among different literary polysystems. These results are expected both to map the space of African literature reception and to boost postcolonial literature research in Spain.

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